

NK1510  
W37

ELEMENTARY  
PRINCIPLES  
OF  
ORNAMENT.



*The  
Mary Ann Beinecke  
Decorative Art  
Collection*

STERLING  
AND FRANCINE  
CLARK  
ART INSTITUTE  
LIBRARY





Woburn B Lucobs

May 17. 1898.

ELEMENTARY  
PRINCIPLES OF ORNAMENT.





ELEMENTARY  
PRINCIPLES OF ORNAMENT

BY

JAMES WARD

HEAD MASTER OF THE MACCLESFIELD SCHOOL OF ART

LONDON  
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED

1890

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,  
LONDON AND BUNGAY.



## P R E F A C E.

THE contents of this book chiefly consist of a series of class lectures, delivered to the students of the Macclesfield School of Art. They are published in the hope that they may be useful to general students in art, and more particularly to those who are specially interested in the subject of decorative design. The illustrations are merely intended as blackboard diagrams, and were used as such when the lectures were given. I have added to the lectures in this book a glossary of terms commonly used in ornament. As a text-book for candidates who wish to sit for the Government Third Grade Examination in the "Elementary Principles of Ornament," I trust it may be found serviceable.

J. WARD.

MACCLESFIELD, 1890.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2012 with funding from  
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute Library

<http://archive.org/details/elementaryprinci00ward>

# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Definition of Ornament—Methods of Expression—Straight Lined Ornament . . . . .	I

## CHAPTER II.

The Curved Line in Ornament—Explanation of the Lead- ing Principles . . . . .	10
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

The Proper Decoration of Mouldings—The Ornamental Treatment of Walls, Ceilings, and Floors—Relief Modelled Work . . . . .	22
---	----

## CHAPTER IV.

The Proper and Improper Shapes of Planes—Uniformity— Selection and Arrangement of Decorative Elements— Painted Ornament—Division of Forms and Shapes in Architecture, &c. . . . .	32
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

The Division of Ornament into Six Great Classes or	PAGE
Divisions—Three of these Classes described . . . .	42

## CHAPTER VI.

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Divisions of Ornament described—Suggestions in Ornament from Plant-Form and Growth—Plants common in Historic Styles . . .	51
--	----

## CHAPTER VII.

The Application of Plants in Design and Ornament— The Acanthus—Its Use by the Ancients on Capitals, Candelabra, and on Flat Surfaces—The Natural, and various Conventional Types, &c. . . . .	60
--	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Symbolic and Mnemonic Classes of Ornament ex- plained . . . . .	72
--	----

## CHAPTER IX.

Christian Symbolism — Comparison of Symbolic and Æsthetic Ornament . . . . .	80
---	----

GLOSSARY . . . . .	85
--------------------	----

# ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF ORNAMENT.

## CHAPTER I.

ORNAMENT, strictly speaking, is the proper enrichment of an object or surface with such elements of form or colour as will give the thing decorated a new beauty, while stringently preserving the original character and form. It is clearly the function of good ornament to *emphasize*, not to *hide*, the surface and profile of the object it decorates. Decoration is not necessarily ornament ; for instance, the sprays of flowers and birds, &c., painted on Japanese pottery, may be called *decoration*, but cannot in the true sense of the word be called *ornament*. This kind of decoration comes almost under the head of a literal transcript from Nature, and has often no particular agreement with the boundary-lines of the surface it decorates. It cannot be denied that it possesses an exquisite beauty of its own, in good drawing, and in the clever style of execution and colour, but with the exception of frets and simple diapers, true ornament is rare in Japanese art. Fig. 1 is a bit of Japanese decoration on an oblong surface. Such a design may be very pretty in its way, but cannot be called ornament. Some-

## CHAPTER V.

The Division of Ornament into Six Great Classes or	PAGE
Divisions—Three of these Classes described . . . .	42

## CHAPTER VI.

The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Divisions of Ornament	
described—Suggestions in Ornament from Plant-Form	
and Growth—Plants common in Historic Styles . . .	51

## CHAPTER VII.

The Application of Plants in Design and Ornament—	
The Acanthus—Its Use by the Ancients on Capitals,	
Candelabra, and on Flat Surfaces—The Natural, and	
various Conventional Types, &c. . . . .	60

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Symbolic and Mnemonic Classes of Ornament ex-	
plained . . . . .	72

## CHAPTER IX.

Christian Symbolism — Comparison of Symbolic and	
Æsthetic Ornament . . . . .	80

GLOSSARY . . . . .	85
--------------------	----

# ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF ORNAMENT

## CHAPTER I.

ORNAMENT, strictly speaking, is the proper enrichment of an object or surface with such elements of form or colour as will give the thing decorated a new beauty, while stringently preserving the original character and form. It is clearly the function of good ornament to *emphasize*, not to *hide*, the surface and profile of the object it decorates. Decoration is not necessarily ornament ; for instance, the sprays of flowers and birds, &c., painted on Japanese pottery, may be called *decoration*, but cannot in the true sense of the word be called *ornament*. This kind of decoration comes almost under the head of a literal transcript from Nature, and has often no particular agreement with the boundary-lines of the surface it decorates. It cannot be denied that it possesses an exquisite beauty of its own, in good drawing, and in the clever style of execution and colour, but with the exception of frets and simple diapers, true ornament is rare in Japanese art. Fig. 1 is a bit of Japanese decoration on an oblong surface. Such a design may be very pretty in its way, but cannot be called ornament. Some-

thing is required to be done with it before we can give it that name.

To make an ornamental design, the units of the decorative material must be arranged and brought to order; repetition and symmetry may not be illustrated, but *even distribution*, order, and balance of masses must be. When a design or pattern ceases to appear *orderly*, it is no longer ornament. The sketch at Fig. 2 is an attempt to illustrate *ornament* by using the same ele-



1.



2.

ments as in Fig. 1, and adding to them the principles of even distribution, at the same time having a due regard to the boundary-lines of the panel in the general arrangement.

Dependent or applied ornament is that which is specially designed and fitted for the position it occupies.

Independent ornament is of the nature of such things as shields, medallions, labels, emblems, and devices, with or without inclosing frames, pateræ, crests, swags, or



festoons, and other *properties*; that is, they may be used alone, or in combination with other dependent ornament.

Numerous examples may be quoted of *inappropriate* ornament. As a rule, any kind of ornament that is not governed by its plan, or falsely constructed from an architectural point of view, may be called inappropriate. For instance, if upright panels and pilasters were decorated with ornament running in oblique lines, or with a strongly-marked series of horizontal bands; or a carpet pattern designed to run in one particular direction; or columns used in decoration, but supporting nothing; consoles or brackets turned upside down (a frequent occurrence); mouldings that are round and elliptical in section, decorated with frets and straight-lined ornament; panels overloaded with mouldings; forms organic or otherwise used together, but out of scale with one another; things made to simulate what they are not; any excess of enrichment,—all this may safely be classed as inappropriate ornament.

*Methods of Expression.*—Broadly speaking, ornament is expressed in three different ways: first, in pure outline, as traced with a point; second, in flat tints, where breadth is added, as in painting with the brush; and third, in relief or raised work, as in modelling and sculpture. These three divisions may be subdivided to almost any extent, but theoretically considering the subject, all the subdivisions are but varieties of the first three species. Looking at these varieties in detail, we find amongst them relief or modelled ornament, with no other outline than that given by light and shade; the same, with the addition of colour, say in two shades—one for the ornament, and one for the background, the expressions here being more defined; the same again with the forms and background “picked out” in a variety of colours, giving a still more prominent character by the colour contrasts. Painted ornament in light and shade, with the addition of colour, is an imitation of the latter: this we will notice again.

Going back to ornament expressed in outline, under this head is classed all the early decorative work by mankind, whether on the prehistoric bone-etchings or on pottery. The decoration on the Assyrian limestone cylinders, and bronze dishes and tablets of the same nation, the incised work on the Greek and Etruscan cista and hand-mirrors, is expressed in outline.

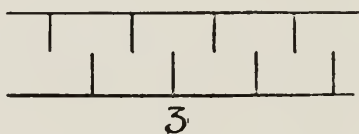
*Sgraffito*-work is a kind of outline ornament cut in plaster revealing a different colour of plaster underneath. The antique vase paintings were executed chiefly in outline. Copper-plate engraved work and glass etching might also be classed as work done in outline.

Ornament on a flat surface, with the addition of colour, forms a large class in itself, and is a common method of expression in decoration. For examples, in illustration, note all Arabesque painted ornament, whether polychromatic or in "*grisaille*": the latter being ornament painted in monochrome-grey (or the tints of black and white), in imitation of relief-work; illuminated manuscripts, and the borders of the same known technically as "illumination." The word "Arabesque," used above, is derived from the Moresque or Arabian ornament. The plant, fruit, flower, and geometric forms used by the Arabians to decorate their walls, floors, and ceilings (the human and animal forms being forbidden by their religion) were called Arabesques; but what we understand now really as Arabesques, originated from the high-class painted ornament of the ancient Romans and Greeks, used by them to decorate the walls and ceilings of temples, houses, and tombs. Everything almost was represented in the animal and vegetable kingdoms; the materials and elements in their composition were usually arranged and composed on a geometric, or, more often, on a scroll-work, basis. The discovery of this decorative painting in the ancient baths of Titus led Raphael to adopt the style, and to improve on it, by introducing allegory and higher-class features as new elements. It may be said, the culminating point in Arabesque painting was reached

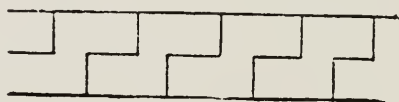
by him and his chief pupil in ornament, Giovanni Udina, in that great work, the decoration of the Loggia of the Vatican. Pursuing the subject of ornament on a flat surface in colour, more examples are : inlaid wood-work or wood-mosaic, called "parquetry" when applied to floors, generally used in two colours or kinds of wood ; marquetry is also inlaid wood-work, generally practised on a smaller scale for cabinets, small boxes, and other things. Stone and metal are also used with the wood, in small cubical forms. Tunbridge Wells, in Kent, is famous for this kind of work. "Tarsia" is another form of the same sort of thing, views of buildings being the chief subjects chosen for representation, besides other ornament. This art was extensively practised by the Venetians in the fifteenth century : the woods employed were usually walnut and boxwood ; panels in chair-backs, coffers, and church choirs were the favourite subjects for this kind of decoration. Glass and marble mosaic, enamels, and stained glass belonged to the same division. Stencilling ; pattern-weaving in textile fabrics ; block and roller printing, both in fabrics and paper-hangings, and also in floor-cloths ; tessellated pavements and tiles—all belong to the category of ornament on a flat surface, separated by colours in juxtaposition. Ornament is expressed in damask cloths and hangings by the changes and crossing of warp and weft, and is shown in flat tints of two shades. The expression of ornament in fret-work, piercing, lace, filigree, wire-work, and wrought-iron, is of a similar class and character, and is generally termed "open-work."

The next division for our consideration will be the "elementary forms" used in ornament. It is assumed that the spaces are given we are required to ornament, such as a ceiling, a wall, a carpet, frieze, or door-panel. The boundary-lines are, of course, the inclosing lines of our space or field, which may be subdivided into smaller panels, with or without borders. This subdividing is called the "setting-out." We have now to think of the

forms and character of the ornament we essay to adopt in our proposed design. At this stage it is advisable to analyze and give illustrations of the various elementary forms used in ornament. As line is the basis of all ornament, let us begin with it. It would be extremely difficult to over-rate the value of the straight line in ornament. The qualities of stability, firmness, compactness, and repose in upright and horizontal lines are well illustrated in the mouldings around panels, and in cornices, columns, pilasters, reed and fluted ornaments. All frets are com-



3



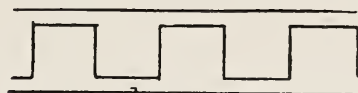
4



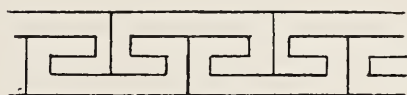
5

posed of straight lines. The illustrations from Fig. 3 to Fig. 19 are specimens of straight-lined ornaments. Taking the stripe or two parallel lines, as in Fig. 3, and marking off equidistant points on the upper one, and corresponding points alternating on the lower one, then drawing vertical lines from these points, we obtain the basis or elements of a great class of fret ornaments. Figs. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 show further developments of the fret. Figs. 5 and 13 show the simple elements on which most of the Moresque or Arabian frets are based, and Figs. 11, 17, and 18 are developments of the same. Figs.

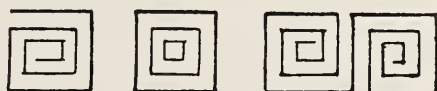
6, 8, and 12 are Greek frets ; 7 and 16 are Chinese.  
Fig. 9 is a Gothic nail-head ornament ; 10 is of German



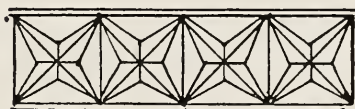
6



7



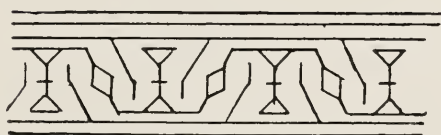
8



9



10

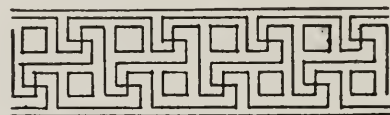


11

origin ; 14 is a Japanese key pattern, constructed on a mesh or net-work of squares ; and Fig. 19 is derived

from the plaiting of straws, and is a straight-lined sort of ornament, common to prehistoric and Byzantine work.

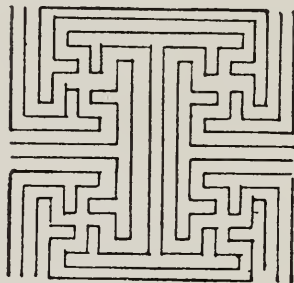
Frets are decidedly more appropriate to flat surfaces than to concave or convex ones ; they may, however, be



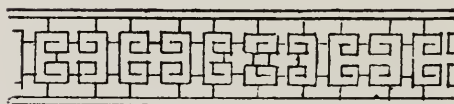
12



13



14



16

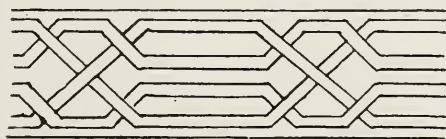
used on slightly concave surfaces, such as the inside hollows of plates or dishes, then their vertical lines will compose well, by radiating from the centre of the plate. The square within square, and double and single fret,



shown at Fig. 8, were often used by the Greeks, and earlier by the Egyptians, on the ceilings of their tombs, both singly and in combination with spirals and circular flower ornaments, alternating with each other, as in bands and border ornament.



17



18



19

Lozenge and diamond shapes are other elements of straight-lined ornament, and form the basis of many repeating patterns in textile fabrics, paper-hangings, and tiles. Hexagons, octagons, and triangles are also used largely as constructive bases in pattern-designing; but, after all, these forms may be reduced to the square and the circle.

## CHAPTER II.

LEAVING the straight line, we naturally come to the curved as the next important element in ornament. It is pre-eminently the type of grace, and the acknowledged "line of beauty." Whether in the outline of the fleecy cloud, the roll of the sea wave, or the rounded limb of the human figure, the mind and eye take a delight in tracing out the flowing curve. We have closed



20.



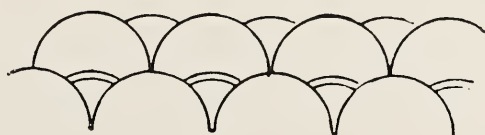
21

curves in such figures as the circle, ellipse, oval, and vesica or fish shape, the latter being composed of two arcs of a circle of the same radius touching each other at their extremities. Curves are said to be open in such elements as the spiral (Fig. 20), the scroll (Figs. 21 and 24), and the swag or festoon (Fig. 23). When the



swag is formed of links and hangs like a chain, it is called a catenary, and as an element is identical with the line observed in festoons and loopings of drapery.

Looking at the illustrations, we have in Fig. 25 circles touching each other; this arrangement is the basis of endless diaper patterns and repeating forms. Next we come to circles intersecting each other, in Fig. 26, a simple and very satisfactory kind of pattern, common



22



23

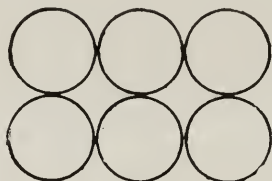


24

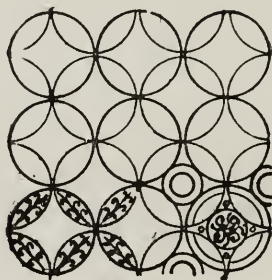
alike to early Egyptian, Arabian, and Japanese diapers. Fig. 27 is a simple border ornament made of circles and segments.

An effective disk border like that made from the cut shells of the savage tribes is shown at Fig. 29, and a more important development of the latter is that of Fig. 30; this is taken from Assyrian tesserae, small oblong pieces of stone or metal, and the decoration here shown

was incised in the surface of the material, often alternating with the *guilloche* pattern (Figs. 28, 31 and 34). The latter pattern was a very important one in Assyrian work, and in Greek moulding decoration,



25



26



27

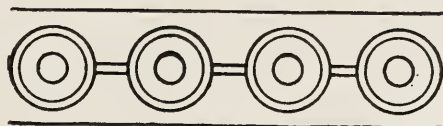


28

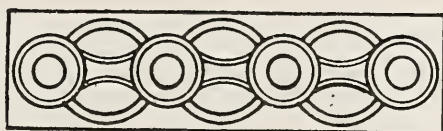
and painted flat ornament. The above-mentioned tesseræ were used as tickets of admission to the theatres of antiquity.

Figs. 32 and 33 are further examples of ornament

obtained from the circle and its segments; the former being the Gothic ball-flower decoration. Imbricated or scale-like ornament belongs to the circle (see Fig. 22).



29



30



31



32



33

We now pass naturally from the circle to the spiral element, from which undoubtedly the greatest part of ornamental forms are derived.

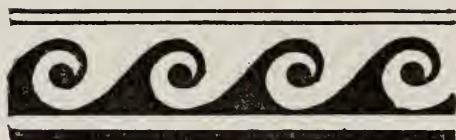
Fig. 35 is an Egyptian wave scroll, and 36 is the familiar Greek wave pattern. Fig. 37 is from Egyptian ceiling decoration; all these types contain the spiral as



34



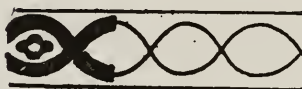
35



36



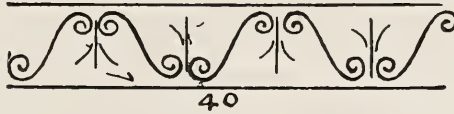
37



39

their chief characteristic. Figs. 39, 41, and 42 may be classed under the head of spiral meanders, Figs. 40 and 44 are the double spire elements of the ogee and scotia moulding decorations.

Fig. 47 shows the anatomy or base lines of the purely æsthetic Greek pattern developed at Fig. 45, while in Fig. 46 we notice very much the spiral curves forming the



40

41



42



44

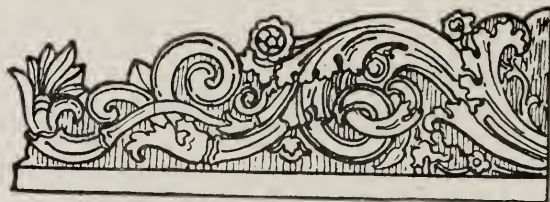


45

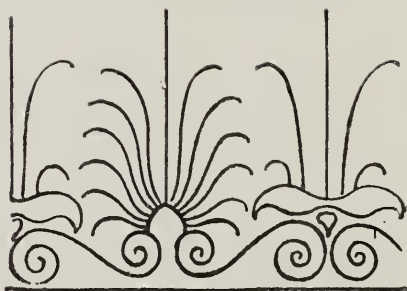
groundwork of the piece of ornamental sculpture from the choragic monument of Lysicrates. As a rule most of the laws of composition in ornament may be deduced

from Nature. In all good ornament it is essential that the principles of "fitness," symmetry," "repetition," "variety," "unity," and "repose" should be considered as parts or qualities that go to the making up of the integral composition.

These may be termed the primary principles. There are others that might be classed as secondary ones, that are not essential, nor yet found in all cases of illustrated ornament, but are very necessary and important in their



46



47

places, such as the principles of "radiation," "stability," "series," "balance," "subordination," "alternation," "growth," "geometrical arrangement," and "order."

"Fitness" may be described as that quality which embraces all the necessary requirements, in material, texture, and arrangement of masses, in a well-ordered design, so that after the units of the composition are set out and balanced with due regard to the plan, any further addition to or taking away from would mar its



beauty or perfect fitness. This quality is the naked *truth* of ornament. Adaptability is merely another term for fitness, and *unsuitableness* is its opposite. Ornament can scarcely be said to have a separate existence from the principle of *symmetry*. The most unshapen form or ragged blot if exactly reproduced on the opposite side of a straight line will make ornament, and at the same time illustrate symmetry.

Neither is there any quality so universal in natural forms; take, for example, the very unsymmetrical single shell of the oyster—you have only to open it out to illustrate symmetry in form.

The same principle is observed in the human figure, for where an unsymmetrical limb or ear, &c., exists, it is balanced by having its duplicate.

Even in trees, plants, and flowers, the same laws exist, for if a leaf or flower be unsymmetrical in itself, as a rule you will find it repeated on the other side of its stem. Trees are more symmetrical than at first sight appear, so are clouds. Nature has the delightful habit of exhibiting waywardness and irregularity, but it is often apparently so, rather than in reality. The laws of equilibrium alone will cause a symmetrical growth in trees; it is only in detail that any difference is seen, and this apparent want of regularity is made up again in the proper balance of the *masses* in foliage and of the *quantity* in the branches and stems. The same remarks will apply to cloud forms.

In arranging the materials for a picture or in a group for painting, the symmetry of mass, colour, light and shade must be attended to, an undue amount of any of these qualities to the weakening of the others in the work produces a corresponding weakness in the whole composition.

“Repetition” in ornament is one of its vital principles, and what we have to consider chiefly is how this law is to be dispensed. The simple unmeaning and æsthetic forms, such as frets, bands, bead ornaments, all moulding

decorations, and simple diapers, may be repeated to the greatest extent without appearing monotonous. Symbolic, and distinguishing forms of any style, on the other hand, may only be repeated to a very limited extent, even if they only are simple leaf forms. When we come to independent ornament, such as emblems, trophies, &c., still less repetition is allowed. Ascending higher in the scale of ornamental elements we come to the delineation of animals, and the human figure. These forms, especially the latter, can hardly be used twice in the same design, or scheme of decoration, except at great intervals. An exception to this rule would be in the case of Cupids or Amorini, and these must not be rendered so much in imitation of Nature or realistic in effect, but a strictly decorative quality must be imparted to them, such as in the arranging of their flowing lines to compose with the ornamental spaces they are intended to occupy. In short, the more like a transcript from Nature the decorative unit appears, the less will it bear repetition. We notice, in all barbaric ornament, repetition carried to excess.

“Variety” is of a higher order than repetition, inasmuch as it requires more skill to deal with it properly in ornament. It is the salt of ornament that cures the insipidity of repetition, and is a great power in the hands of a skilful designer.

“Contrast” is akin to “variety,” but of a more emphatic kind. In examples of the best ornament it takes an important part. In linear ornament the circle and straight line give the greatest contrast, and in colour it is the chief source of virility. It is the factor used to produce force, power, and brilliancy ; without it your work will appear sleepy, monotonous, and dry. It is, however, no enemy to “repose” in art ; rather, when contrast and repose are united, the result is breadth and grandeur. In the ornament of the Renaissance, *contrast* is best illustrated, owing to the great variety of forms and elements used. We have the delicate varieties of the



acanthus foliage contrasting with vase forms, labels, shields, armour, fish, and other animals, and also the human figure. Almost anything of an ornamental character and well-defined form has been used in harmony and with complete success by the artists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in pilasters, panels, friezes, and spandrils.

“Radiation” is a principle illustrated to a great extent in Nature, and is of several kinds, such as radiation from a point, from a vertical line, and from a horizontal line. The law of tangential growth as seen in most plants, where the minor stems and the leaves spring from the parent stem, is a species of radiation, and is important in the construction of scrolls and similar ornament.

In plants of horizontal growth and in umbelliferous plants, the spiral lines in shells, the primary feathers of a bird’s wing, the fingers in the human hand, are amongst the subjects that illustrate radiation from a point. The secondary feathers in the wing of a bird radiate from the horizontal line of the humerus bone.

The so-called honeysuckle ornament, or anthemions of the Greeks, afford good illustrations of radiation, and they are always finer in style when they radiate more from a horizontal line than from a single point; the leading lines, pipes, and ribs of acanthus foliage, as seen in capitals of columns and pilasters, radiate mostly in this way.

Festoons and swags have their radiation on the principle of drapery hanging from point to point.

“Balance” in ornament is a quality so necessary that all bad and debased work may be distinguished by the want of it. Balance differs from symmetry in this respect, that you may have true balance in form, line, and colour of a design without symmetry, as in work where the detail is quite different; but otherwise, if it is to preserve its dignity as good ornament, it must have its general masses arranged on a symmetrical basis. Want of balance is noticed in the Rococo style of ornament, in

the more naturalistic part of Pompeian, in Japanese work with all its beauty, and in nearly half the ornamental productions of the present day.

“Repose” is the opposite to unrest or spottiness. It is well illustrated, and is a characteristic of classical architecture, in opposition to the unrest of the pinnacled and spiky forms of the Gothic styles. While the former is in consonance with a southern climate, where broad shadows and shelter from the sun are desirable, the latter is suited to colder and moist climates, where its sloping roofs and pointed character afford the least surface to rain and snow, and thus in a great measure protect and preserve the building.

Horizontality, or a horizontal line, may therefore be taken as the essential principle of repose, and its opposite may be illustrated by a vertical line.

From this may be deduced that all horizontal growth of ornament possesses the quality of repose in a greater measure or degree than ornament otherwise constructed. Care should be taken not to confound repose with heaviness.

In designing the positions of border lines or mouldings to a panel or pilaster, we should regulate the widths or distances apart of the lines as to prevent the monotony seen for example in the lines of a ruled copy-book or an assemblage of telegraph-wires; no two interspaces or lines if possible should be of the same width.

In the window openings of factories, and in the endless rows of iron railing to gardens and parks, we notice this same kind of monotony, which is very depressing to the eye; little or no more expense would put a larger window here and there, or a more ornate one, and a larger rail post, or two or more joined together in an ornamental way, at regulated intervals, would tend to relieve the monotony, and add a pleasure to the life of the beholder as well.

This want of what is called “alternation” in design or decoration is of the same character, and analogous to a surface or object that is decorated so elaborately

with a diaper pattern or otherwise, without a break or plain surface left, that it is really wearisome to look at.

The value of plain spaces is enormous in design. Charles Lamb, in one of his delightful letters to Coleridge, says in finishing: "I will leave you, in mercy, one small white spot *empty* below, to repose your eyes upon, fatigued as they must be with the wilderness of words they have by this time painfully travelled through." To the designer this analogy will be obvious and useful.

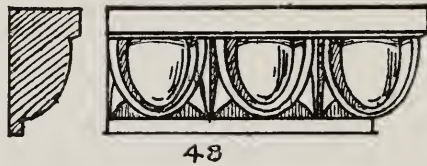
Plain spaces as alternations in design, are the oases in the wilderness of ornament, and they may also be compared to a refreshing silence, after a great noise.

It is easier to fall into the sin of making too much of a good thing, than it is to weigh your quantities or to know exactly where to stop. Any excess of ornamentation must be guarded against, for it generally leads to still greater excesses.

Elevating the material at the expense of the spiritual element leads in the end to decay in any style of art.

### CHAPTER III.

IN the decoration of mouldings it has been the custom, in the best periods of ancient art, to invariably adopt the profile or section of the particular moulding as the basis or plan of the chief lines of its decoration. Nothing could be more satisfactory to the production of a pleasing and artistic result. By this means, the moulding never lost its character, however elaborately it might be enriched. The diagrams from Figs. 48 to 57 will help to illustrate this : for instance, at Fig. 48 we have the “ovolo,” or egg and tongue moulding ; at 49, the “cyma



reversa” ; at 50, the “cyma recta ” or “ogee” ; at 51 and 52, the “astragal” or bead moulding ; and at Figs. 54, 55, 56, and 57, examples of ornament suitable for flat-surfaced bands or small facias. When the latter is sunk or channelled into the surface, it is called “fluted,” and when raised in relief it is known as “reeded” ornament. All the above examples serve to bring forcibly to our notice that good ornament must be governed by its plan.

We may next consider briefly the ornamental treatment of walls, ceilings, and floors.

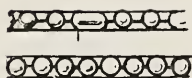
Beginning with the floor, it is distinctly necessary to remember that in floor decoration the sense of flatness should always be maintained, whether it be in carpets,



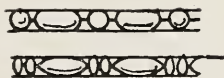
49



50



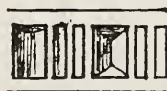
51



52



53



54



56



57

rugs, floor-cloths, mosaic, tiles, or parquetry. Nothing should be introduced to disturb the flatness, such as in shading the forms, or in imitation of mouldings. All realistic renderings of an animal or floral nature should be carefully avoided. The colour may be as varied as

you like, but evenly distributed, and sober in tints. Mosaic work is amongst the earliest examples of decoration applied to floors. It is still of the highest order in the scale of floor decorations, but its use is limited to halls and passages, floors of baths and museums. On account of its cold qualities, it cannot with comfort be used in ordinary rooms. It is usually, and may be, treated with borders and lines like the framing of a picture, and the field (or central space) either very simple in colour, or diapered with spots of decoration. Black or dark grey and white, or black and cream colour, is the most satisfactory treatment. If other colours are to be used, then low-toned reds, greens, grays, and yellows are to be preferred.

Interesting as it would be to pursue this subject of mosaic decoration, and many others that arise, in the present series of lectures, it is, however, hardly possible to do so under our title ; but this may be attempted on a future occasion, in a more practical consideration of the applied arts. Floor-cloths and linoleums are of modern introduction. The decorations of these coverings are best when they partake of the nature, in their design, of inlaid work, whether as tiles, woods, marbles, or larger mosaic patterns.

In carpets, the pattern should, as a rule, radiate from geometric points ; at least the more important diaper-spots should be on a lozenge or square basis, so that the eye should not be carried in any one direction more than another. If animals are used in carpet decoration, they should have, while preserving the nature and type, a conventional and simple outline, and should be treated flatly and in recurring intervals. Realistic flowers, birds and the human figure, are out of place in carpets. A border always improves a carpet if designed in sympathy, with the centre.

Wall decoration is of many kinds, such as paper-hangings, painted patterns, stencilled decoration, plain tints of colour, silk and tapestry hangings, stamped leather and

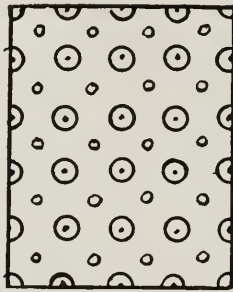


its imitations, and also wood panelling. If pictures are to be hung on a wall, it is obvious that a low-toned yet cheerful style of decoration only is admissible, since the pictures themselves are the principal part of the decoration, and the wall should be strictly regarded as an unobtrusive background. The best decoration after simple colour would be paper-hangings, silk or tapestry. If paper-hangings, the pattern should be chosen or designed to hide, or at any rate to emphasize as little as possible, any diaper-like spots; for the eye should not be arrested by any particular form, or be carried vertically, horizontally, or obliquely in any direction in a good design of wall paper. In illustration of this, we may suppose the diagrams, Figs. 58, 59, 60, and 61, to represent wall spaces. Now all these decorative arrangements are bad when considered as wall-covering designs; but as out of evil good is sometimes evolved, so a pattern, as at Fig. 62, that partakes of a little of these four elements in detail, will be the best kind of arrangement for a paper-hanging pattern, which, at its best, only pretends to be a background for furniture, pictures, and other objects.

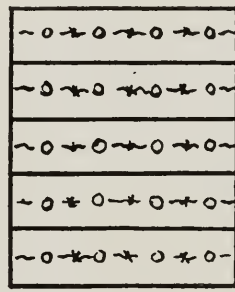
The diagram, Fig. 58, arrests the eye; 59 and 60 tend to show height and breadth in the extreme; that is, patterns in which vertical or horizontal lines predominate will have the effect of producing an undue elongation or contraction respectively of the surface of the wall or other object they decorate; whilst the diagram 61 will, on account of the oblique element being dominant, become a symbol of weakness, and ought to be counteracted by its opposite lines, as in the zig-zag element, or steadied by a judicious use of the former three. It will appear plain from the above considerations that a pattern, to be satisfactory and appropriate, whether it be in textiles or paper-hangings, if used as a background must neither arrest the eye nor carry it in any particular direction.

The height of a dado or wainscoting in a room depends a great deal on the height of the ceiling; it is also very much a matter of taste. If the wainscot be higher than

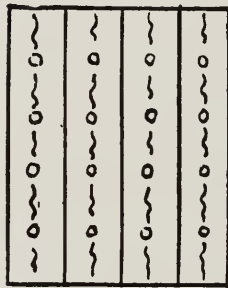
the centre of the wall between floor and ceiling, the upper part of the wall may have stronger decoration, and in a more naturalistic and flowing style of pattern than what would be admissible on a wall with a lower dado. If there should be a frieze in the room, a still freer and more pictorial treatment is allowed on this wall division. Wall spaces should not be panelled in small rooms, as the window-openings, doors, and fireplaces break up the space



58



59



60



61

sufficiently. If the rooms, though small, have high ceilings, then a dado or frieze is an improvement in these cases. On ceilings there is more room, and also more reason, for elaboration and variety, both in the setting out and distribution of ornament. This may be approached in a great many ways. First, in taking the cornice as a frame or border to the ceiling, and then regarding the field, or ceiling proper, as a space to decorate, the simplest



way would be to treat it in diaper as in the diagram, Fig. 63, or to cover it over with a scroll-work pattern with recurring *pateræ* of different sizes, as in Fig 64. An effective treatment consists in lightly covering the field with a series of festoons or swags, and ribbons steadied by *pateræ*, labels, shields, or medallions, the depths or radii of the swags to be in proportion to their respective parallel sides of the ceiling, as at Fig. 65.

In dividing a ceiling in panels, either in painting, or in framed and relief work, one panel or division should be



62



63

larger than any of the others, and so appear dominant; and this should be proportionate in dimensions to the whole ceiling (see Fig. 67). The surface at command should be so divided that no two series of panels shall be the same in width; this need not be strictly observed in the widths of the styles or interspaces, which may be more alike. Figs. 66 and 67 show such arrangements. Great care must be exercised in designing the subdivisions of ceilings, so that the mouldings, interspaces, and panels may be well contrasted, by obtaining an harmonious mean between the

several divisions. The safest guide for the designer, in preserving the requisite unity of proportion is found in



64



65

the spacing of the mouldings and members in the cornices of the best examples in the Greek and Roman temples.

A study of these divisions will help the designer in setting out and spacing ornament generally on any surface. In the case where a ceiling to be decorated is already divided by beams or joists, the panelling, if admissible, should be repeated in the different compartments. Ceilings of corridors or long rooms may be divided across at discretion, but still the arrangement of panels should contain some elongated ones, that would be dominant,



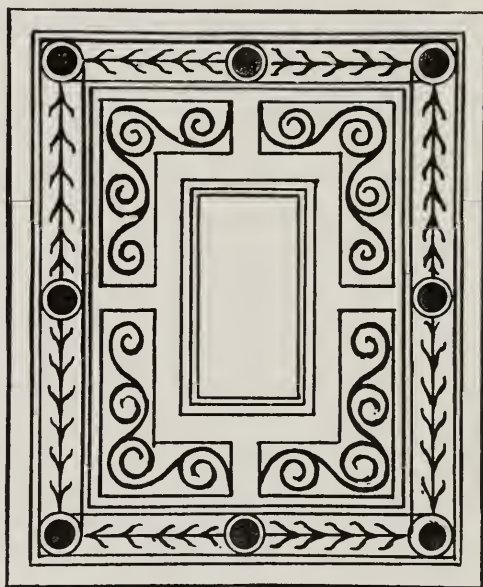
66

and of nearly the proportion as the outlines of the whole ceiling.

Regarding relief work or modelled ornament on ceilings, this should be so regulated in amount of relief that the light from windows or artificial light should cause little or no cast shadows ; the forms should be carefully rounded off in the more important masses to lessen the abruptness of cast shadow. An equal division of the larger masses of light and dark, connected and softened by lesser tones

of depth, would perhaps be the most desirable arrangement.

On the carved surface itself, the treatment should be rendered so that the play of light and shade may be quite secondary, and not compete in strength or violence with the naturally deeper shadows cast by the ornament itself on its ground. If this is not attended to, confusion and obscurity are the effects produced.



67

The proper balance of light and shade is of the greatest importance in relief ornament. This class of ornament is seen to greater advantage out of doors, and we may here remark that in a sunny climate, a lower relief in carving, and more delicacy in the moulding ornaments in architecture, would be admissible than in a colder one like ours, where strong light and shade are seldom observed ; and from the above reasons, a stronger and bolder treatment of relief, and also a rougher texture of surface in choice

of the material, are more adapted for a climate where grey weather prevails. Before leaving the subject of relief ornament, it would be as well to state as a good principle (though it is often violated on the score of cheapness and convenience) that no carved decoration should be fastened on, or appear to be stuck on a ceiling or panel, but should be a part of the panel, and if possible be worked out of the material itself.

## CHAPTER IV.

IT is necessary, in designing shapes of planes, that at least a pleasing and well-proportioned outline may be the result. To arrive at the conditions of harmony in length, breadth, and contour, the principle of *contrast* must be judiciously exercised. To a certain extent, the eye may be trusted to acknowledge the harmonic mean in the dimensions of planes, but it requires, as a help to the student, some kind of a guide or rule that may be always kept in view. This can only be found in the strict keeping of all outlines in planes, whether curved, rectilinear, or a combination of these two, *contrasted* with themselves in length, breadth, and configuration. Taking them individually, the square and the circle are emblems of unity, but in shapes that deviate slightly from them there being little or no contrast, and an ill-afforded loss of unity ; it is not, then, a cause of much wonder that such shapes are disagreeable to the eye, and it follows that in planes of harmonic and agreeable proportions we require to show clearly a decided contrast at least in the length and breadth. A parallelogram whose dimensions are a double square, a form of plan that a great many of the Greek and Roman temples were either built on or nearly approached, is a good standard of proportion for panels or decorative paintings, and a plane whose breadth is about two-thirds its height may be taken as a figure of good proportion ; ellipses or ovals of the latter dimensions



would be also harmonic in form. The uniformity of shape in a circle and a square, though essential in many cases in architecture, is, however, inartistic in ornament, especially in painted decoration ; either the contours of these forms must be broken (as in the round heads of flowers, in the square nail-headed Gothic ornament) when used in painted and low-relieved decoration, or the aid of perspective must be enlisted to render them artistic, by converting them apparently to oblong and elliptical shapes. It is an old acknowledged truism that the superiority of the Greek mouldings over the Roman lies in the fact that the former are designed from the sections of the ellipse, and the latter from those of the circle. Many causes have been assigned to account for the ellipse being a superior ornamental form to the circle : the prime reason would appear to be that while the circle possesses unity it lacks contrast ; the ellipse having both requisitions qualifies it at once as an artistic and pleasing form, far above the circle, which is dowered only with unity ; of course this applies equally to the sections of each figure from which the mouldings are designed.

The form of the human figure, or of an animal, delineated in elevation or drawn as a silhouette, is decidedly inartistic, though naturally and essentially uniform ; it gains, however, considerably in an artistic point of view, when drawn or seen in perspective ; this is simply because it loses a little of its unpleasant uniformity, and gains a corresponding amount of contrast—the contrast of foreshortening and diminishing of similar parts with others seen, let us say, more parallel to the picture plane. It will be seen that uniformity by itself cannot be considered a good quality in ornament ; it is only a part of the whole that requires the addition of contrast or variety. Uniformity produces monotony, which is always painful to the eye in design.

The remarks previously made on ceiling-divisions will apply generally to the dividing of any plane in harmonic spaces : the same rule—namely, that the general outline

by its character, will govern and define the method of spacing subdivisions, inasmuch as one division must be larger or more prominent than any of the others, and also it must be the first or principal echo of the general outline, while the smaller subdivisions will be echoes necessarily fainter, but characteristic of the minor qualities, such as in contour and area. This can be illustrated in the divisions and spaces of a decorated vase; in this instance we deal only with the surface as a field

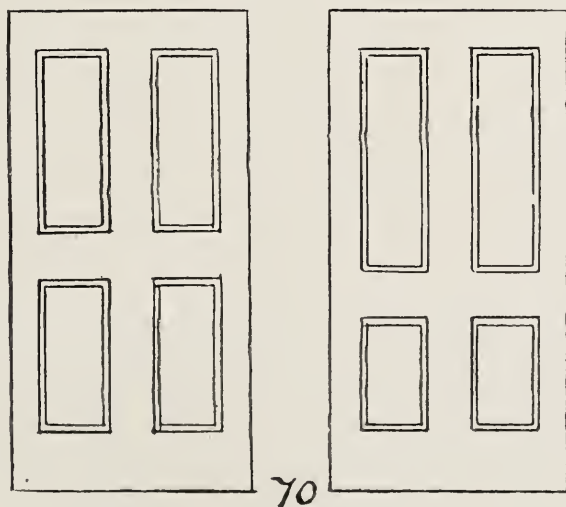
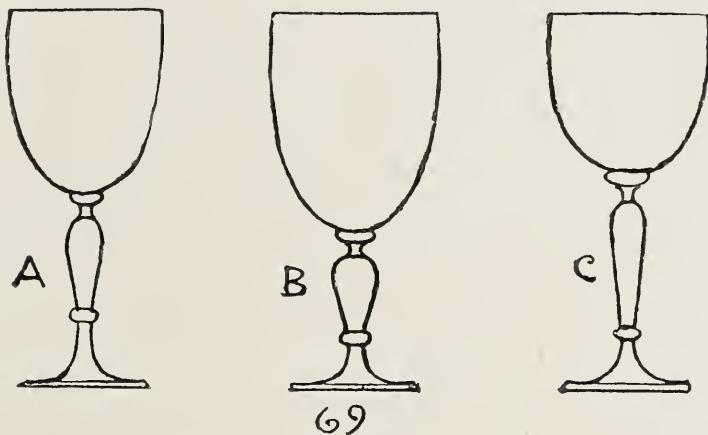


for decoration. The lines of subdivision are drawn across the object at those points of height where the transition of curve is most apparent in the outline, and a proper expression of binding strength is thereby imparted (Fig. 68).

We have in Fig. 69 three examples of drinking-glasses; it will be seen that A is not artistic in proportions, by reason of the stem being of the same height as the bowl, whilst B and C, not having the same uniformity of height-

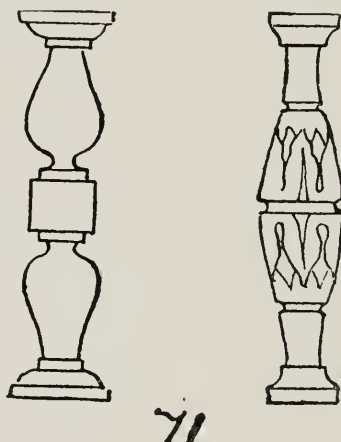


measurement, are more pleasing shapes ; this applies also to the panels of doors at Fig. 70. Any marked uniformity in the principal measurements of the divisions in planes



or solids never looks well, and ought to be avoided. It would appear an exception to this, in the uniform measurements of such objects as balusters and spindle-shaped figures, but it really comes under the rule that the

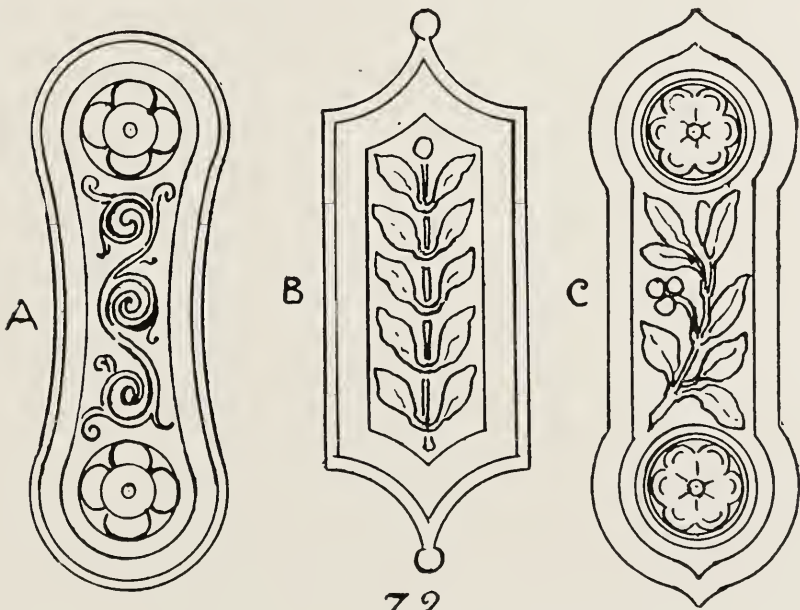
outline of the object determines the order of the subdivisions, and these forms having bisection in height and width, an equality of division is necessary throughout (Fig. 71). The shapes of planes in ornamental objects, such as shields, finger-plates of doors, panels of cabinets, labels, banners, devices, &c., should be designed so as to avoid weak outlines, as sharp and angular or soft and undulating ones. The finger-plate designs (Fig. 72) show at A an outline very disagreeable in its soft and uninteresting shape, at B the other extreme of a sharp and angular character, while at C a mixture of the two is the more pleasing form.



Of course sometimes a soft or an angular outline may be infinitely helped, and partially cured of its insipidity, by the use of opposite elements as units of form in the decoration of the surface spaces, as will be seen at Fig. 73; here the circular or curved line unit is applied to the decoration of the angular surface border, and the straight-lined fret appropriately decorates the circular form. The general outline of the patterns naturally falls in and composes with the outlines of the objects. While speaking of the decoration of planes, in illustration of the principles of ornament, the diagram at Fig. 74 may be

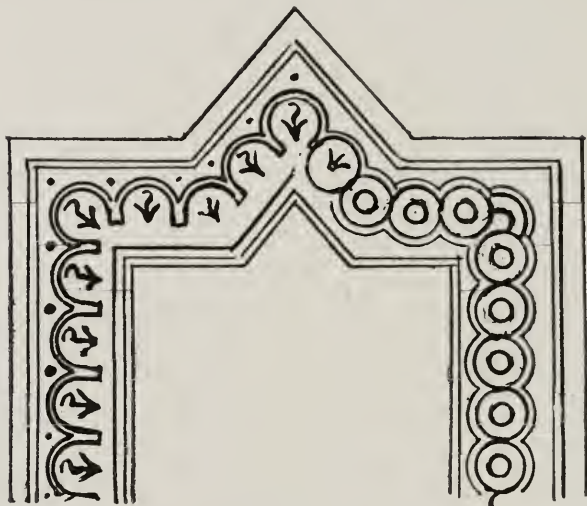
given as a good example of the selection and arrangement of the simple decorative elements. It is a capital example of savage ingenuity, being a shield made of woven cane, decorated with *appliqué* work of cut shells, sewed on the ground-work of black and yellow cane, and is the work of South Sea Islanders.

First, there is the simple but fitting shape in the outline, then the horizontal bands that with a show of strength



emphasize the points where the outline is weakest ; the constructive ground-work has a good contrast of circular oblique, upright, and horizontal lines ; and lastly, the decorative work of cut shells further beautifies the object, and the selection of those forms that are in unison with the ground-work pattern is judicious and correct. The weakest part of the decoration is where too many of the circular units are applied, at the top and bottom ; the undue repetition of these forms gives an undesirable

quality of monotony, which appears to be the first sin in all barbaric ornament.

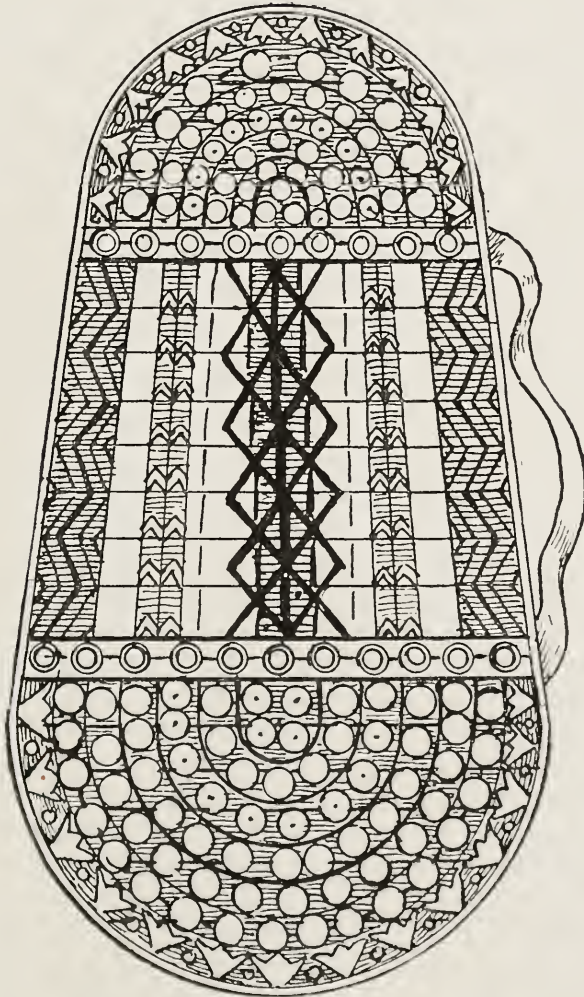


73



Flat surfaces should never be destroyed by their ornamentation, painted decoration, for example, should not have cast shadows; a slight rounding of the forms is

admissible, and often adds to their beauty, but it must never be carried so far as to make the decoration appear



74

to want cast shadows ; it is obvious that shadow paintings of ornament are imitations of wood or stone carving, and, unless we want purposely to deceive the eye as to the



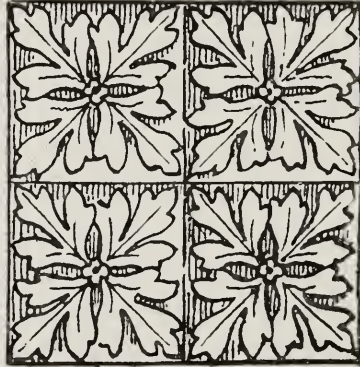
nature of our work, there is no reason why this imitation of carving should supplant genuine painted ornament.

The geometric diapered carving on old English furniture, the spandril carving in Westminster Abbey and other churches, and the superimposed system of low-relieved work in Moorish wall decoration, and the carving on Indian sandal-wood boxes, are all good examples of decorative carving suitable to flat surface, inasmuch as they all add beauty to the surfaces they decorate without destroying the architectural flatness. In solid objects, as vases, candlesticks, and other articles, whether for use or made merely for ornament, the structural part of the form should never appear to, nor take the place of a decorative one, but the decoration may without violating good principles be copied from a structural form. The ornamentation must not take the place of the thing that it ornaments, otherwise you might as well have some other form really more suitable if you hide the original one in elaborate enrichments ; it amounts to a case of constructing your decoration, which is always a grievous error in art, just the reverse of this being the proper thing to do. On the other hand, structural forms have often been used in decoration ; for instance, what may only be a moulding or an ornament at the base and middle parts of a building, as cornices, dentels, small balusters, balconies, &c., may at the top and upper parts be really principal members and important structural parts. In good examples of architecture we find the straight-lined elements at lower parts of a building, circular or curved forms combined with right lines in the middle parts, and a more curved, flowing, and lighter character of line in the upper parts. These well-known principles may with equal truth be applied to decoration, and even to the detailed structure of a piece of good ornament. Stability and simplicity with sober colouring should be illustrated in lower parts of any scheme of decoration, lightness with freedom of curvature and refined gaiety of colour may be used in the frieze or upper

parts, and on the middle spaces, whether it be a temple, a house, or a vase, these parts being nearest the horizon and therefore on a level with the eye, all the skill and resources of our art should culminate here ; and so in these modern times we have pictures on such spaces in private houses, frescoes and wall-painting in churches and public buildings, and the skill with which the ancients decorated these central parts of their vases and bronze cistæ is well known to us all.

## CHAPTER V.

HAVING previously considered the principal elements of ornament, it is necessary to classify it broadly so as to simplify it as a study. To do so in a simple and concise way, it would be a good plan to divide ornament generally into six classes or great divisions, as



75

follows :—

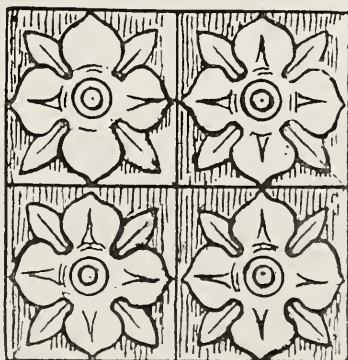
First, uniform surface decoration, known as diapering.  
Second, horizontal bands and stripes, as friezes, &c.  
Third, perpendicular bands, as panels of pilasters, &c.  
Fourth, symmetrical arrangements used as central decorations.

Fifth, ornament composed of any two of the above.



Sixth, compositions specially designed to fill spaces, not included in the above.

Taking the first, the student will not find it a difficult matter to understand what a "diaper" is ; it may safely be said that three-fourths of conventional ornament consists of diapers ; nearly all woven fabrics patterns, the majority of paper-hanging designs, patterns produced by weaving or painting, either from blocks or rollers, tile patterns—in fact, any pattern that repeats from the four cardinal points over a surface is in reality a diaper, however complex it may be in itself. It differs only by its complexity from a simpler spot or unit that is repeated oftener, notwithstanding its greater size or less frequent



76

repeat. The derivation of the word comes from "*linge d'Yprès*," being the name given to the linen of that peculiar pattern, composed of squares, and such like simple ornament placed close together, and was first made at Yprès, in Flanders. Some of the best examples of pure diaper patterns are to be found sculptured on the walls and spandrels of Westminster Abbey, Lincoln and Canterbury Cathedrals. These were imitated from original diapers painted and woven on linen and other fabrics. Diapered work is very frequent in Arabian and Moorish ornament (see Figs. 75, 76, 77, and 78).

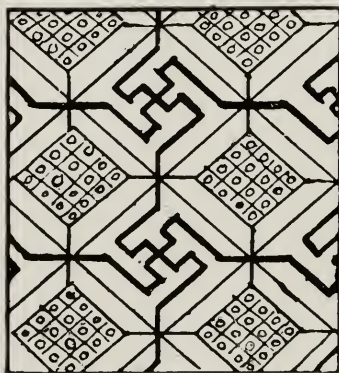
"Diapering" is distinguished from "spotting" and

“powdering” by the unit of its composition being adjacent, and also by its geometric construction. In spotting or in powdering it is not necessary that the surface should be covered equally, or that the spots of



77

ornament should be of the same size or character. The Japanese and Chinese styles of decoration afford good examples as illustrations of spotted and powdered work (see Figs. 79, 80, and 81).



78

The “second” division is next in importance when we consider its extensive application in ornament. The Greeks were pre-eminent in the design and use of the

horizontal band in their decorations, both painted and sculptured. The embroidered patterns on their dresses and curtains, and the beautiful ornament on their vases, were mainly designed on the horizontal band or frieze system. The *frieze* is a very characteristic feature in Greek ornament and architecture; if you take frieze or band ornament out of Greek work there is very little



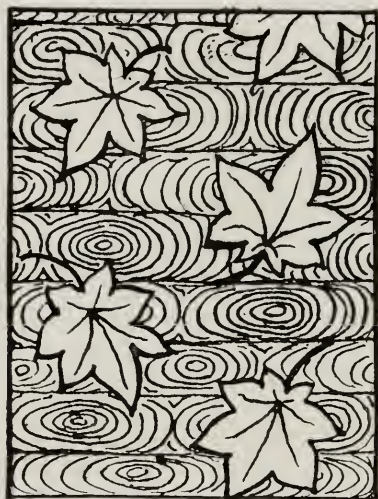
79

ornament of any kind left. Figs. 28, 36, and 45 are favourite frieze and flat band patterns of Greek origin. A few dress ornaments from the vase paintings are shown at Figs. 82 and 83.

Spotting at regular intervals was the favourite way of decorating the larger surface of dress material. The circular flower that usually formed the spot in Greek ornament was composed of a greater number of petals than the later Roman and Gothic, which shows its Assyrian origin (see Fig. 82). Persian work affords also good examples of horizontal band treatment (see Figs. 84 and 85).

Third division: perpendicular bands are not so common in decoration as the former class of ornament; they

are mostly architectural in character, and usually form divisions between panels and wall-spaces, such as pilaster



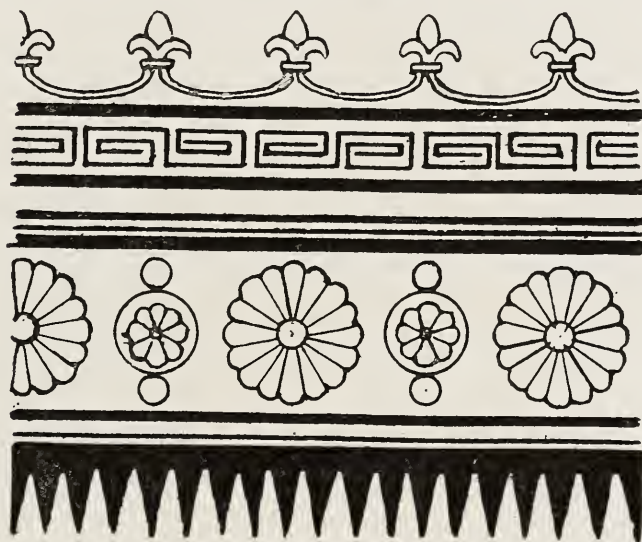
80



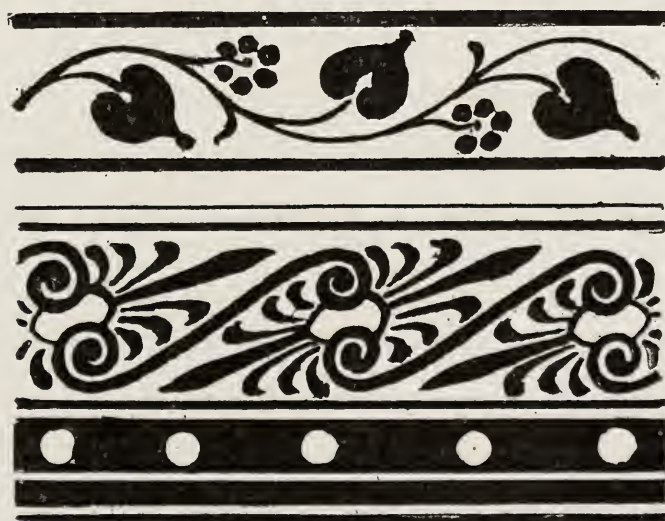
81

panels, upright border to panels, stops in the nature of triglyphs in friezes. Partly belonging to this class would

be soffits of arches in classic styles, and the decoration of side and under surfaces of groins and ribs in Gothic



82



83

roofs. The decoration on these parts, when constructed to cover the surface uniformly, is best when it starts from



the springing of the arches and meets at the apex ; this treatment would class it with pilaster decoration, and of course a perpendicular band ornament. Panelling and scroll work are other methods of decorating a soffit, and seem well adapted for the purpose ; the soffit of an arch

84



being really a kind of ceiling, or something between a ceiling and a pilaster (as far as the decoration of it is concerned), and so may with propriety be treated as either in decoration. As to pilaster decoration, if in relief, this should be low, and although some of the minor



85

details may almost sink into the groundwork, still there should be nothing vague ; none of the fine edges should completely melt into the ground, the danger here being a loss of architectural severity that is most essential to a pilaster, it being a feature in architecture somewhat of the nature of a column or a support. So in the orna-

mentation of it, any picturesque freedom that would be admissible in a spandril or a panel of any shape would be out of place in a pilaster ; for example, the decoration on a panel or spandril may wander almost any way over the surface, but that on a pilaster must be symmetrically built with the strongest elements at the base, and the



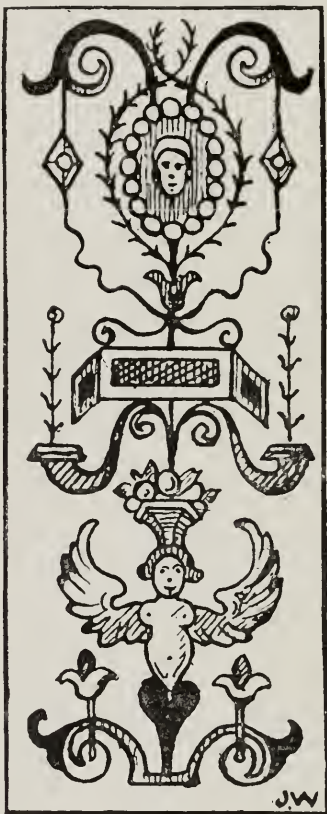
86



87

lightest at the top. The best examples of this kind of decoration will be found amongst the well-known Louis XII. pilasters, and many others of the Cinque-Cento period. The artists of this time seemed to pay an equal attention to pilaster decoration as the Greeks formerly did to

horizontal band work. Figs. 86, 87, and 88 show some arrangements in the lines and masses of pilaster orna-



88

ment, the latter being a design for painted decoration, and the two former for carved work.



## CHAPTER VI.

FOURTH division, "Symmetrical arrangements used as central decorations." Under this head a higher class of ornament is reached than what can be attempted in the previous divisions. It is the commonest and most rational way of designing for panels of doors, of furniture, of ceilings, and of walls; in fact, on any space or field where inclosing mouldings or border lines exist, a central symmetrical arrangement is well suited as decoration. Headpieces, tailpieces, pediment and lunette compositions belong also to this class. Figs. 89, 90, and 91 are examples.

Fifth division, "Ornament composed of any two or more of the above classes." The consideration of this division leads us to examples of finished work in almost all kinds of ornamented objects. Take, for instance, a table cloth or cover, or a carpet: the border belongs to the second division—that of horizontal bands; the centre or field may be composed of diapers alone, or partly so, and partly filled with a central symmetrical arrangement. The student will have no difficulty in multiplying instances of this kind.

We have now to consider the sixth and last division. The ornament in spaces of unusual and awkward shapes comes under this head. Quaint and fanciful compositions that are not symmetrically disposed, heraldic and mnemonic ornament, and that composed of trophies, such as

groups of armoury, musical instruments, craft emblems, and coats of arms (see Fig. 94). The ornament in spandrils may be said to belong to this class, for in

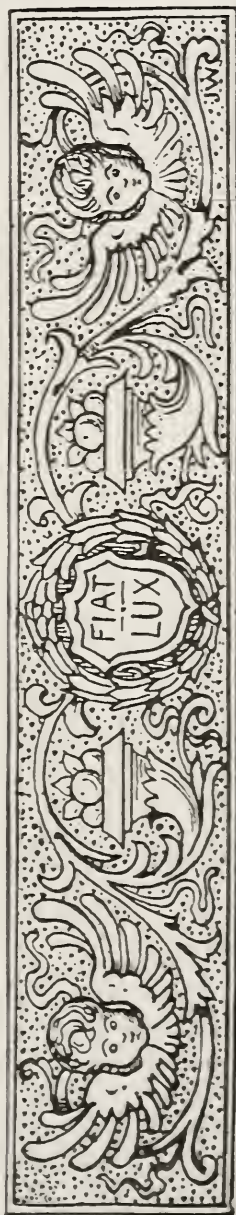


decorating such a space the utmost freedom is allowed in the treatment : it is a peculiar architectural feature coming between arches, or at the angle of a wall and an arch ;

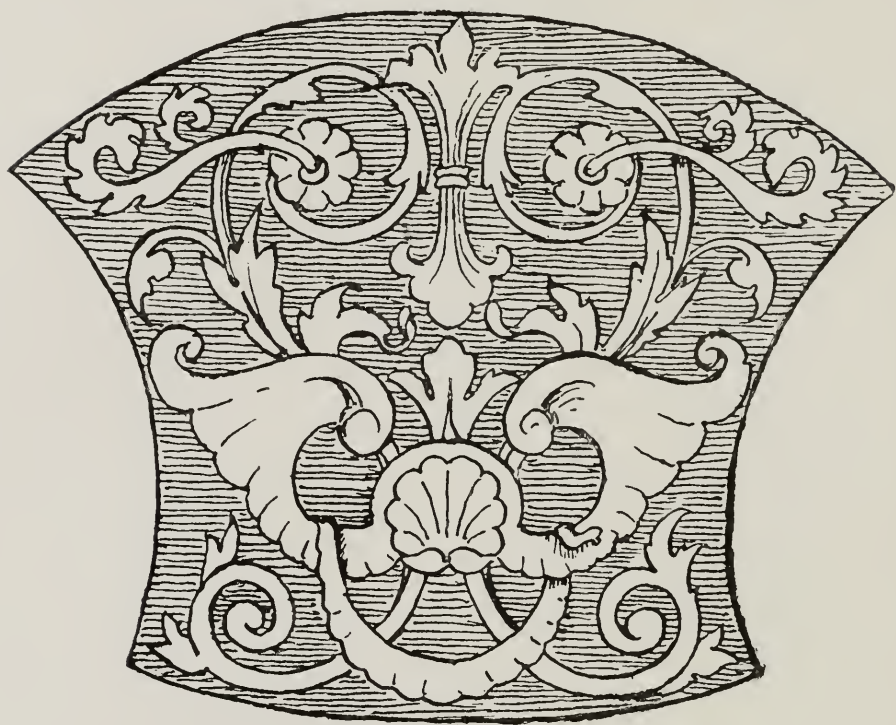
and if the arch mouldings are properly emphasized, the spandril can all the more have a free and unsymmetrical treatment, for in this way it does not appear so constructively important as the panel of a pilaster, and so the greatest freedom is allowed to the sculptor or decorator. The Gothic spandril (Fig. 92) from Stone Church, in Kent, is an admirable example of this kind of decoration, and Fig. 93 shows a partly symmetrical design for a spandril between round arches.

The ornamentist is indebted very much to floral and plant forms, both for material and suggestions in design, more than to any other division in the domain of Nature. The architect, for his very first principles of construction, as well as for his last touches of decorative grace and beauty, will acknowledge his debt to the vegetable kingdom; and the repetition of a single spray of floral form applied as decoration to a mechanical production will elevate it to a work of art. Nearly all, and certainly the best, conventional and purely æsthetic ornament was the outcome of the study of flowers and plant growth.

That great characteristic form in Greek ornament, the



anthemion, or so-called honeysuckle pattern, can be clearly traced (not from the honeysuckle), but from the Egyptian lotus flower ; the conventional rendering of this flower into ornament was copied from the Egyptian forms by the Chaldæans ; and later the children of those ancient flower-worshippers, the Assyrians, developed the pattern into forms more ornate. The Greeks in their



91

turn copied the anthemion from the Assyrians by the way of Asia Minor : at first we find it archaic and stiff, but full of vitality, as ornament, and well adapted for its various uses and positions, but at last perfected, as in the Erechtheum example, to such a degree of æsthetic purity, that it lost all traces of any particular plant origin, but embodied the best qualities of natural plant growth,

such as vigorous life combined with grace and elegance ; so that it may be said to imitate in its lines and construction the underlying principles of plant growth in general,



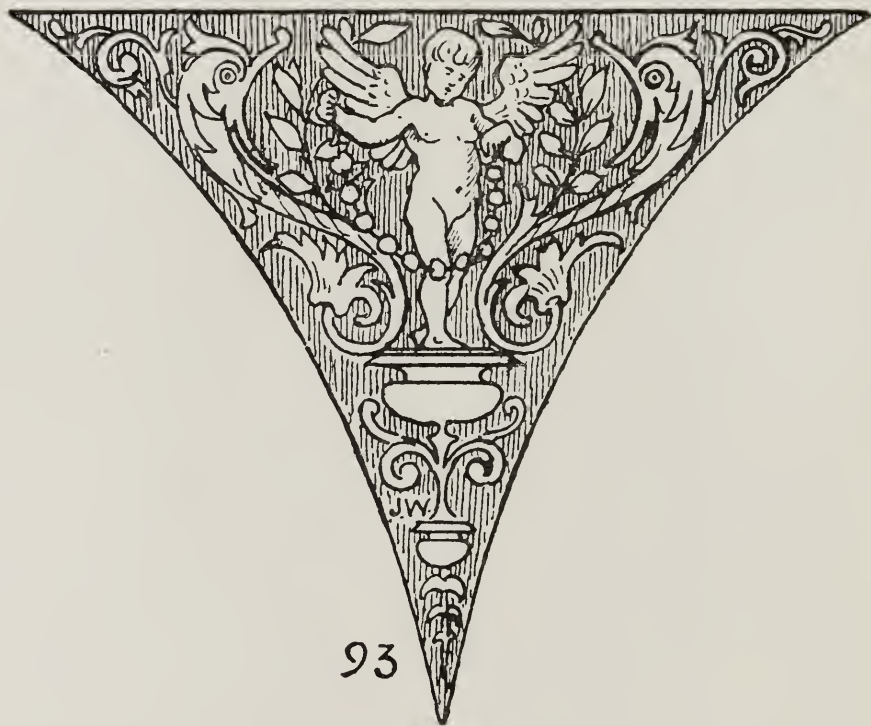
having passed from its ancient prototype the lotus plant form to a concrete expression of vegetable nature with artistic unity.

Another phase of floral and leaf growth, and its proper



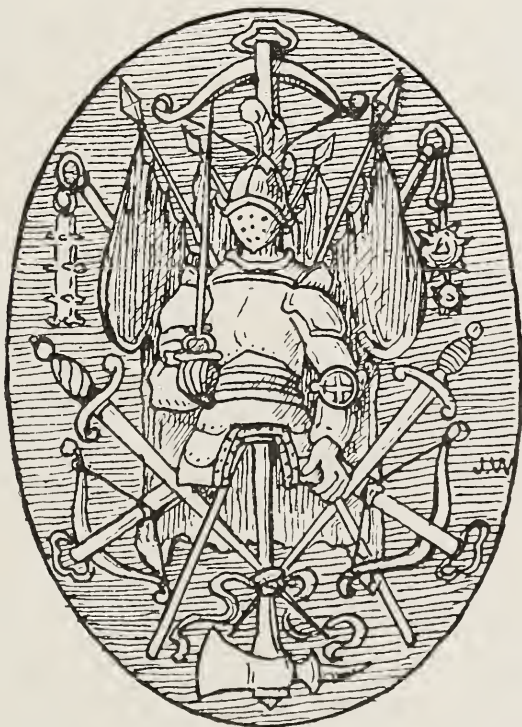
development to pure ornament can be studied in the many rosette patterns of the various styles. These, though circular in plan, which at first sight would appear to be derived from flower heads and cups, are in reality a cluster of leaves arranged and radiating like the spokes of a wheel, or in a spiral form, from a central point.

There are many plants, as, for instance, the bedstraw and the madder plant, that have their sets of leaves



arranged in a whorl around the joints of their upright stems : looking down on these leaves we notice the plan appears like a rosette. This idea must have occurred to the ancients when designing their rosettes and pateræ. The results obtained by grouping a cluster of leaves together in this manner are finer and stronger in appearance, particularly for sculptured work, than any mere imitation of flower heads (see Fig. 95). Leaflets and

bracts growing at the junctions of stems and leaves furnished also ideas and forms for the making up of rosettes and such-like ornament (see Figs. 46 and 96) ; but more use is made of these bracts in what is called "clothing the stems," some varieties of which are illustrated at Fig. 96 ; in fact very good ornament is often

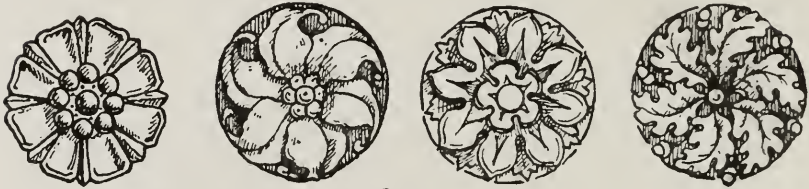


94

composed of a stem or waved line clothed with these bracts alone. Root forms are not used so much in ornament as they might be, perhaps from the fact that in Nature they present an incongruous mass, and of course are rarely visible in a plant, and it being generally easier to design a springing or beginning in many other ways, such as hiding the root in a vase or vase form ; Re-



naissance pilasters afford common illustrations of this. Mediæval and Gothic work, Indian and Persian work, abound in examples of good treatment of roots in decoration (see Fig. 97). It is clear that the general outline of the root only must be taken, and the character of the



95



96



97

growth simply expressed to prevent confusion and obscurity. As a general rule, all redundance, excrescences, and accidental waywardness of growth that might be interesting to a botanist, ought to be avoided in a decorative and conventional rendering of plant form, the

higher beauties and general nature alone ought to be expressed, and what may seem a paradox, the less naturalistic we make our designs, the more Nature we will put into them—that is to say, we should strive to put the best *intentions* of Nature into our ornament, avoiding poor and stunted forms, as well as over-nourished and rank ones (for we find Nature abounds in both) ; but to seek for the finest and the most typical forms of leaves, flowers, and stems, and try to make our designs express the higher ideal that Nature herself is striving after. The truest ideal, after all, is only the most natural.

In Persian ornament we find flower and plant forms treated in a thoroughly decorative manner (Figs. 84 and 85) ; the pink and hyacinth were favourites with Persian decorators, as the maple and vine in mediæval and Gothic work, the lotus and papyrus in Egyptian, the peony in Chinese, and the chrysanthemum in Japanese ; while such styles as the Arabian, Greek, Roman, and Celtic, are more purely conventional, and, without having much apparent naturalism, are still the outcome and are based on natural forms.

. CHAPTER VII.

**S**TUDENTS in design cannot be too strongly advised to cultivate the habit of making small but correct drawings of all kinds of plants, both in flower and in fruit,



FIG. 98 LAUREL

especially plants of single flower and of simple growth, accompanied by careful notes of the construction at the stem and leaf junctions.

There is no need to make a botanical analysis of a

plant for the purposes of design; sections of petals, stamens, leaves, and fruit, may serve a scientific end, but make a very poor show in what is intended for an artistic design. Landon the poet thought it was an act of cruelty to cut a flower from its stem: it would be interesting to know his opinion of that school of decorators who believe in dissecting plants to find "new forms," so that many of their designs present novelties that Nature never dreamt of, such as broken stems, leaves neatly cut



in half, flat elevations, and sections of petals, stamens, pistils, and seed pods, and other curious forms, suggested by these dissections, so that the design when completed is at best an ironed-out barbarism, and certainly innocent of any violation of the second commandment. In this respect the designers of this school will tell you that their work is unlike the Arabian or Moresque decoration (the artists of which were forbidden by their religion to make a representation of anything in "the heavens above or

the earth beneath"), inasmuch as theirs all comes from Nature,—but, with the barbarous aid of the knife and scissors. The whole testimony of the best old decorative design is decidedly against the above practice, and it is refreshing to see at the present time a reaction setting in, mainly owing to the efforts in England of such men as Morris, Crane, Burne-Jones, and a few others who prefer Nature to novelty ; and, as a consequence, we see already

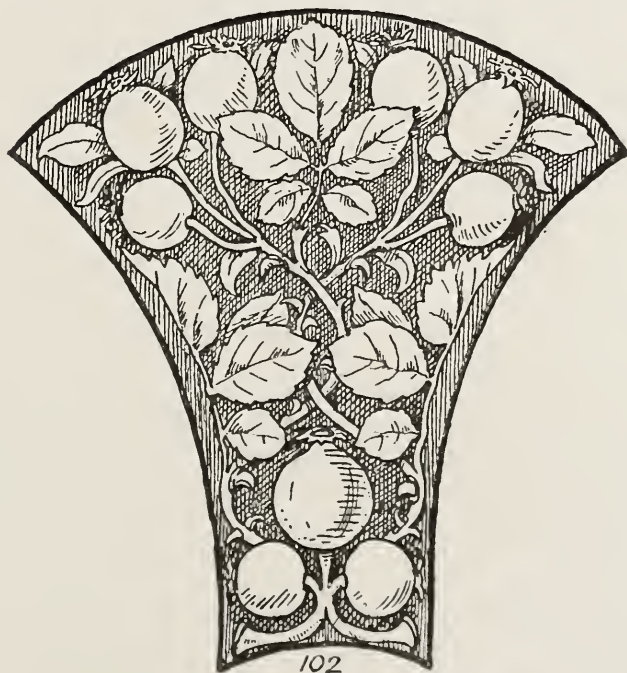


the beauty and truth of the old work returning afresh, like the flowers again in the spring of the year.

In selecting plants for particular purposes and positions in design, it would be as well to bear in mind the material we wish to decorate, whether it be textile, wood, or metal, so as to choose that kind best adapted by their fragility, as the harebell, wild poppy, grasses, and ferns, to muslins, cottons, and lace ; the mallow, oak, orange,



lemon, and other plants of sturdy growth, to wood-carving, stone, and iron-work. At the same time a too rigid adherence to these principles is not always to be advised, for many praiseworthy and masterly designs have been produced entirely in opposition to these rules. What is really of more importance, whatever plant we may use, is not to violate the growth and character; for instance, a plant like the laurel (Fig. 98) is best suited for a border



design, either upright or horizontal (see Figs. 99 and 100). The wild rose (Fig. 101) and the lemon (Fig. 103) are both suitable for panel spaces of any form almost, or for all-over patterns, as in paperhangings, &c. (see Figs. 102 and 104). For narrow upright panels, such plants of upright growth as lilies, ox-eye daisies, &c., would be most suitable (see for illustration Figs. 105 and 106). A trailing or creeping vine makes a good ceiling decoration, and was used properly as such by the Byzantine mosaicists.



Lastly, plants of horizontal growth, as the dandelion, would be best adapted for a floor or table covering design.

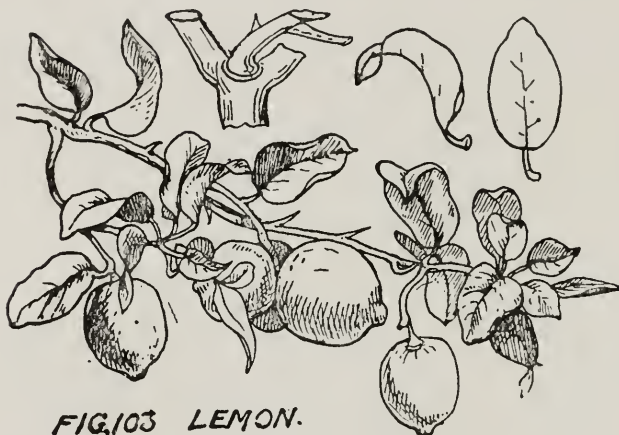


FIG. 103 LEMON.

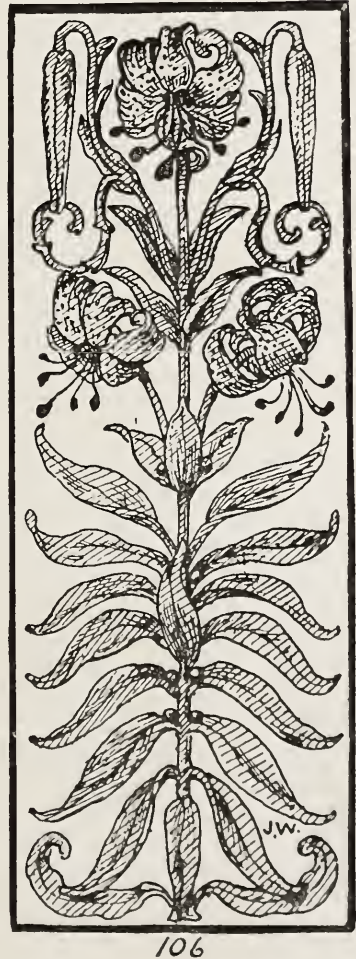
To extend our consideration of plant form, we naturally turn to the well-known conventional type of foliage that is classed under the head of the *acanthus* and its



104.

varieties. There have been various suggestions concerning the supposed identical plant from which the so-called *acanthus* leafage is derived, but, like the anthemion

ornament of the Greeks, there still remains an obscurity about it ; although some believe it to be cleared up. The story told by Vitruvius of the finding of the plant, by the



sculptor Callimachus, growing around a basket that was covered by a square tile (the whole thing suggesting to him the origin of the Corinthian capital) is plausible, and certainly a pretty one. At any rate, Callimachus is

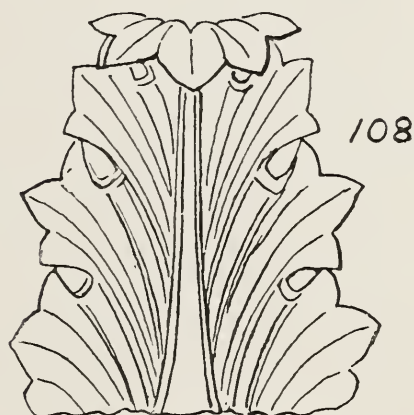
credited with the first use of the acanthus in capitals of columns. The ornamental forms of it bear little resemblance to the natural leaf (see Figs. 107, 108, and 109). The two latter are specimen leaves of the Classic ornament, and the former has been drawn from nature. The acanthus, as we know it in the capitals of the Greek



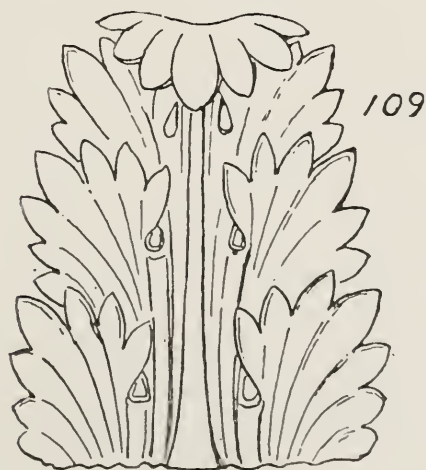
*ACANTHUS . FROM NATURE .*

Corinthian and the Roman Composite orders, is more of an artistic creation, adapted to suit the ends of a grand style of architecture as decoration, rather than an imitation of a particular leaf. The chief characteristic of its difference from natural leaves in general is in the "pipes" that start from the "eyes" at the base of the

leaflets, and, somewhat contrary to nature, taper downwards to the base of the leaf; now these pipes, together



with the central stalk, impart that dignity and strength which is highly necessary to architectural foliage, especially when it adorns the bell of a capital (see Fig. 110).

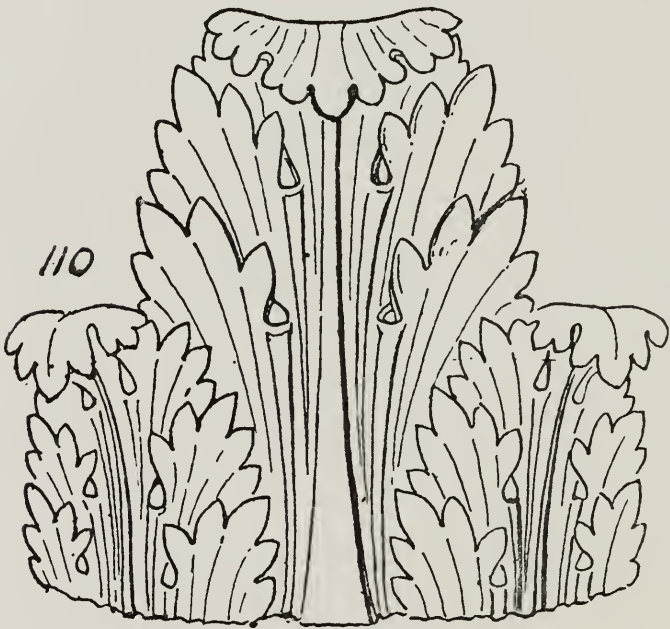


The pipes in the conventional leaf are less important and almost omitted in examples of smaller work, such as the acanthus of pilasters, candelabra, painted and panel



ornament, constructive strength not being required to such an extent in these as in large capitals.

On the Corinthian capital, the acanthus presents a simple edge exactly repeated on each leaflet, with far less serration than is seen in natural foliage: this imparts dignity to the leaf. On brackets or modillions a more serrated and smaller variety is used, with the stalks and pipes still prominent, while on candelabra and small pillars the leaves lie flatter, the leaflets of which overlap,



and owing to the fact that the leaves are smaller in scale and nearer to our eyes, more serrations and more detail altogether may be put into them, for like any other art production, the smaller the scale the more detail is necessary (see Fig. 112). To prevent the foliage in the latter examples from appearing weak or flimsy, as it would naturally do with a much cut up and overlapping edge, the edges of the leaves as a rule should be slightly thickened and rounded so as to catch the light and shade,

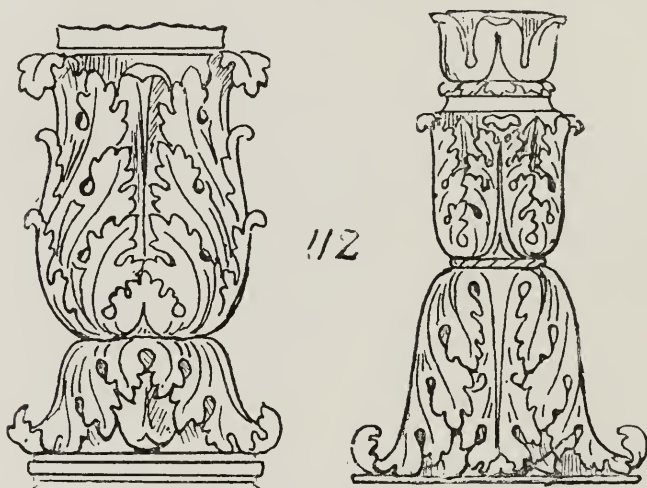
thereby giving a rich quality to the decoration. The Greeks, it would appear, used the acanthus sparingly, and of that kind known as the *Acanthus spinosa*, or the prickly variety; the Romans preferred the *Acanthus mollis*, or the soft-leaved and more cultivated kind. A more conventional sort, called the *olive*, from a resemblance of its *tines* or subdivisions to the olive-leaf, has been used in capitals of the columns in the temple of Jupiter Stator at Rome (see Fig. 109). A bit of the soft-leaved acanthus is shown at Fig. III from the soffit of the same temple. The Romans used the acanthus in an inordinate and lavish way, overloading



mouldings with it, and any available space in their buildings with the same infelicity that marked their character in other ways, all tending to a great love of show; the arch of Titus, for instance, is overdone with decoration. The more modern type of acanthus used on majolica plates and painted decoration is of a very free and fanciful character; it is here more secondary, being generally found in combination with grotesques and animal forms. The utmost freedom in the curve and reflexed curve may be allowed in the painted forms of the acanthus, this being logical enough when we consider that the greater part of this particular variety of leafage is



generated by the free play of the brush (see Fig. 113). The arabesques of the Vatican, and the Italian glazed earthenware of the Cinque Cento period, afford the best examples of this painted foliage. The acanthus was the parent of nearly all the subsequent styles of decorative foliage down to our Early English Gothic, and the history of its modifications has clearly established the difficulty of trying to improve on the original Classic type. We are advised in a general way by artists and writers on art to seek for a new variety of leaf that might in time rival the acanthus in ornament. The advice is praiseworthy, and many



have given their thoughts to it, but no lasting results have as yet foreshadowed themselves. Of late years there appears to be a kind of scroll-work very much in favour with some artists. It of course cannot be called new, any more than anything else in the world; but its persistent application, from illumination to stone-carving, will perhaps in time stamp it with an independent character. At present it is more like a sea-weed than anything else, but also partakes of the acanthus, ox-eye daisy, or wild poppy leafage. Perhaps it is just as well that we should have no fixed school of ornamental art, as variety of thought

seems to be more in harmony with the national temperament than anything else possible or likely in this age; and also, when artists themselves disagree as to what is good and bad in ornament, or at least favour one thing to the exclusion of another equally good, nothing, it will appear from this, can live long enough to gather sufficient strength to stand co-equal with the art of that old nation



which dwelt in the unity of artistic thought, and gloried in the worship of the beautiful. To gain a fuller insight into the delicate varieties of the acanthus, the student is advised to carefully examine and draw the foliage as seen in the pilasters from the tomb of Louis XII., and the works of the late Alfred Stevens, who has done more than any one of late years in properly applying a certain type of acanthus to low-relieved modelling.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE “symbolic” and “mnemonic” classes of ornament are very extensive and interesting, alike to the historian, the antiquary, and the student of art. It is no easy task to draw the line between them; the latter skirts the ground of the former so closely that the division is hardly apparent. We generally understand mnemonic ornament to be that class which includes as part of its composition any written characters, signs, printing, natural forms, and hieroglyphics that are used as aids to the memory, for the purpose of recalling other scenes or facts that may or may not be in harmony with the nature of the thing decorated; as, for example, we see this class of ornament used to decorate the walls and porches of Arabian mosques; the texts of the Koran in Kufic characters interspersed with ornament in these houses of prayer, and the same decoration on vases and cups for domestic uses. Japanese ornament abounds with mnemonic characters with or without other accompanying forms. The primitive picture-writing of savage tribes hovers between the two classes under consideration. In the decorative art of every nation can be found illustrations of written characters and inscriptions on their buildings, utensils, and articles of luxury; and further, as in the case of some missals and illuminated manuscripts, it is often difficult to know where the lettering ends and the ornament pure and simple begins.

The art of illumination or decorative writing really begins when we pay more attention to the ornate forms and fashions of the letters than to the matter we have to express. It becomes then decorative writing, executed for its own sake, and would be classed in the same category as a studied piece of elocution in which the manner or style of expression is of more importance than the subject.

It may be not far out of place here to say that it requires no great effort of the imagination to trace from the primitive picture writing and Eastern hieroglyphics the origin of all our painting and sculpture, for when this early kind of writing diverged into more ornate ways, when we find it executed on bark, papyri, plaster, and stone, or woven in rude textiles, and illuminated with colour, here is clearly seen the origin of decorative and picture painting. This work on the stone surfaces would be first merely drawn or painted, but to make the record deeper, and to last for succeeding ages, it was incised or relieved with the aid of the chisel; afterwards we see a great advance as in some of the portraits and full-length statues of the kings of Egypt. It is worthy of note, as a principle in architectural ornament, that the winged bulls, sphinxes, and seated figures of Egypt, Assyria, and India, were carved *in situ* out of the building material, as in the rock-hewn temples, or in the figures that form the entrance ornaments to doorways, and built in so to speak, forming an integral part of the architecture, and thus giving a dignity and repose to the building that detached sculpture does not always achieve; we see from this that the primary use of sculpture was for the decoration of buildings, and that painting and sculpture both had the same parent, which was outline drawing. To resume, the severest form of letter has often become in the hands of an artist a highly ornamented cipher. Monogram and cipher are almost synonymous terms, the former only differs from the latter in this respect, that, in addition to its fulfilling the office of a monogram, it is at the same time a distinctive mark of a person, a society, or a syndicate;

for instance, a monogram may have different forms of the same letters in its different varieties, and still have the same meaning, while a cipher cannot have more than one particular form (such as a trade-mark) or else it defeats itself. The decorations found in the tombs of ancient Egypt, on the sarcophagi, and stone tablets, &c., are mnemonical in character, although this was not the primary reason of their existence: utility, not ornament, caused them to be sculptured on the granite slabs; their use was solely to record the names and virtues of the deceased kings and persons of note; but the perfect balance and even distribution of these inscriptions, with their horizontal and vertical placings, render them highly decorative, and gives them a mnemonical character (see Fig. 114); this diagram is the inscription in hieroglyphics taken from the famous "Tablet of Four Hundred Years." It is the third line of the twelve on this monument, and is translated thus: "King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Ra-user-ma, Sotep-en-ra, Son of Ra, Rameses Mer-amen, Chieftain enriching the lands with memorials of his name." The inscription at Fig. 115 occurs frequently in Japanese pottery, it represents the word "Jiu," meaning longevity or everlasting life. Other emblems of longevity with the Japanese are the following: the god of longevity is a very old man with a large head, and of merry countenance, holding a scroll in his hands and accompanied by a crane, as an attribute, and sometimes a stork or a sacred tortoise. The crane by itself is an emblem of long life; the bamboo, the fir, and the plum together make an emblem of longevity, the gourd is another like emblem. Religion has had, from the earliest period of man's history, Art for its earthly handmaid, and nine-tenths of symbolic ornament pertains to religious ordinances and ceremonies. Nearly all art beginnings largely expressed religious thought by means of symbols; the picture writing of savages, the hieroglyphic or priestly compositions of the Egyptians on papyrus and granite, the Runic and Ogham inscriptions of the Northmen and ancient Irish, were alike

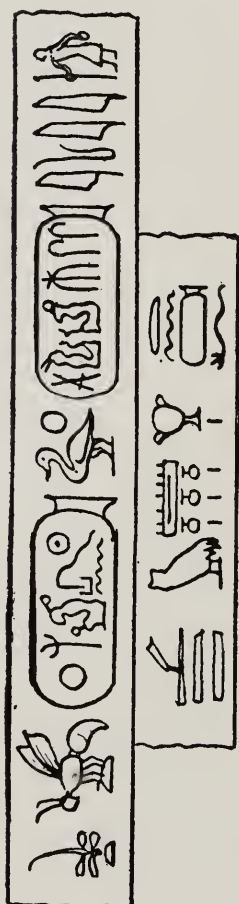


endowed with an occult meaning, whereof they were symbols to the initiated only. Many of these hieroglyphical units were enlarged and elaborated into good symbolic ornament, as at Fig. 116 we have the winged globe so common in Egyptian art, which has been found sculptured on the lintels of temple doorways almost thirty feet in length. The globe is said to symbolize the sun, the outspread wings the overshadowing presence of Providence, and the asps dominion or the monarchy—the three great powers that watched over Egypt and her children. Mostly all Egyptian ornament was symbolic, and in a certain sense mysterious, like the national character. The canons or laws laid down by their priests and chief scribes for the guidance of artists (who were often the priests themselves) were for centuries unvarying; every ornament, including representations of the human figure, was drawn and sculptured by rule and receipt—no one was allowed to alter these types under severe penalties. The blue *Nymphea* or lotus flower is pre-eminently characteristic of Egyptian ornament (see Fig. 117); it was sacred to them as the type of coming plenty, for it appeared just before the springing of the rich crops, and immediately after the subsidence of the Nile waters; it was therefore the harbinger of their daily bread, and little wonder it was worshipped by them as the emblem of earthly goodness. There is a species of lotus that bears fruit, and it is recorded that the form of the Jewish seven-branched candlestick was derived from it. The lotus has been used in the decoration of everything Egyptian, and the fresh natural flowers were used in garnishing offerings to their gods, and also presented as a peace offering to strangers and visitors. Next in importance to the lotus came the palm as a symbolical plant; this was used more by the Assyrians in their bas-reliefs. It was represented under the symbol of the “tree of life” (Fig. 118). This figure is taken from a slab in the British Museum: there is a figure on either side of it offering worship; the palmated form of the





115



114



116



117

surrounding conventional foliage suggests the date palm, which was certainly the tree of life to Eastern nations, affording them food and shelter in many ways. Many animals, birds, and hybrid creations, such as the sphinx of the Egyptian and the winged bull of the Assyrian sculpture, had symbolic meanings.

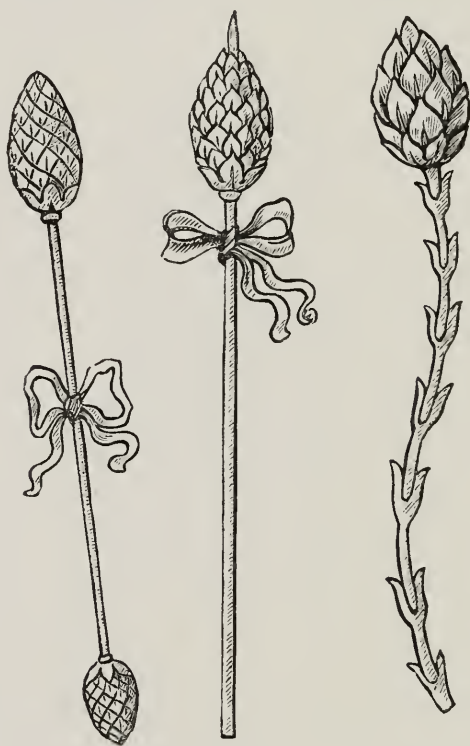
The fir cone, so common in Assyrian ornament, was an emblem of fire, as the lotus was an emblem of water, and the fir cone placed on a stick or on a spear-head, and



FIG. 118 TREE OF LIFE.

adorned with a fillet of ribbons, was carried by the priests and chorus when celebrating the festivals of Dionysus, the Greek Bacchus. This is known as the "thyrsus," or wand of Bacchus (see Fig. 119). The pine tree was sacred to Dionysus, in consequence of it supplying the turpentine to make torches, and wine also that was made from its cones, two important elements used in these festivals. Ovid describes the thyrsi as dangerous weapons, literally being spears hidden in clusters of ivy or vine leaves. The two latter plants were

sacred to Bacchus, and are classed as symbolic ones in Greek and Roman decoration. Early Christian and mediæval art is teeming with symbolic ornament which goes under the names of "allegory," "emblems," "attributes," "symbols," "images," &c. Allegory may be said to possess a higher meaning than any

*FIG 119*

of the other terms ; in art it differs from them in this respect, that, while possessing a veiled or hidden meaning in common with them, it also must have, to be worthy of its name, an expression of ideal beauty in composition and form. This abstract quality distinguishes it from an emblem or a symbol, nor is it necessary that it should

possess an accompanying attribute, which generally is found with a symbol or emblem. In the recent picture called "Hope," by Mr. Watts, we have a fine illustration of allegory in a seated figure on a sphere, or the world, bending her ear to catch the strains from a harp which she plays, but which has only one string left ; there is a weird feeling of loneliness about the whole composition, but just relieved from utter desolation by the little music that is left in the one string.

## CHAPTER IX.

WE have noticed before how the arabesques of the Vatican were raised to a higher scale in ornament by Raphael introducing allegorical subjects as new elements. Many of these subjects were borrowed from old Greek gems.

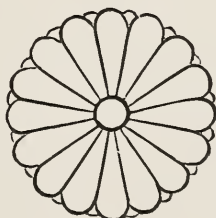
When a cipher or a sign is made to do duty for a reality, or is the comprehensive expression of a reality, and it conveys to our minds an idea, or any particular association of ideas, we call it a "symbol." The commonest form met with in symbolic art is the circle. In Christian art it is the emblem of eternity, by its having neither beginning nor ending, and often appears as a serpent in circular form with its tail in its mouth; but perhaps the circle in the nature of a wheel has had the widest signification in art. The wheel of fire, or sun-wheel, was an emblem of the Teutonic sun-worshippers. The *tchakra*, or sacred wheel, is the emblem of the religion of Brahma, it is the shield of Brahma and Vishnu, also a wheel of fire, which is to the Siamese at once a type of universal dominion, a sign of disaster, and the symbol of eternity (see Fig. 120). The wheel form at Fig. 121 is the *kiku-mon*, or badge of the Empire of Japan; it is, however, derived from the chrysanthemum.

Christian art, from the beginning of the first century of our era to the tenth, consisted almost entirely of symbols

and signs. The first Christians were fearful lest their new converts would be inclined to worship any image of Christ or the Almighty, and so mistake the picture for the reality—the dead clothes for the body that had gone. There was good cause for this apprehension, since it is recorded that one of the Roman Emperors placed the image of Christ as a thing to be worshipped amongst the statues in his gallery of pagan deities. The *chrism* was the first and the simplest form of symbol that was used by the early Christians to represent Christ; we therefore find it to consist only of a monogram, as a device in which the first three Greek letters, Ch and R, in the name of Christ occur, as shown at *a* in Fig. 122; another form



120



121

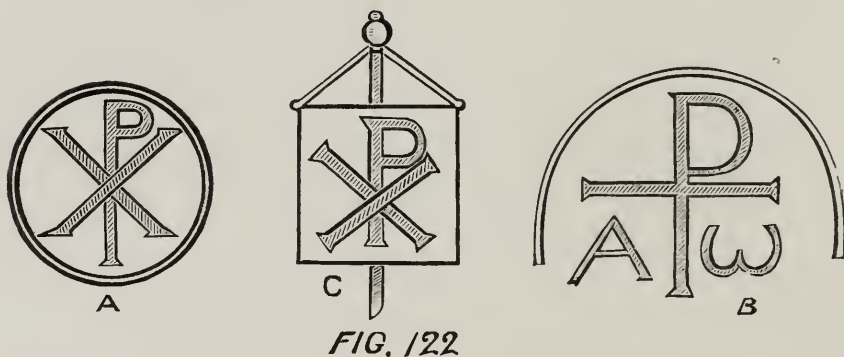
of the *chrism* is shown at *b*, in which a cross of equal length of arms is formed of the letters, and also the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega, are added; this form sometimes appears as a nimbus over the head of a lamb, the latter standing on a round hill, at the bottom of which issued four streams, the whole symbol signifying "Christ the first and the last, the Lamb of God," and the streams, "the four evangelists, whose gospels were the water of life to the whole world."

At *c* (Fig. 122) we have the seal that the Emperor Constantine adopted, and placed on his standards after his conversion; this is known as the *labarum*. Christ was often represented as Orpheus, with a lyre in his hand, amidst birds and beasts; the commonest personification,



however, was Christ as the Good Shepherd caring for his sheep, and always represented young and beautiful. Everything evidently in the way of emblems and allegories symbolizing the Founder of the Christian religion, was carefully rendered pleasing to the eyes of the new converts, and anything pertaining to the dreadful scene of the crucifixion was equally avoided. The Christian Church was symbolized under the form of a ship, with our Lord as the pilot, and the passengers the congregation, from whence we have the word *nave* (of a church), a place of worship, from *navis*, a ship.

The dove is the emblem of the Holy Spirit ; the pelican and the phoenix, of the atonement ; the serpent, of



prudence, wisdom, and cunning ; the butterfly, of the resurrection. A fish, or, rather, a fish form, the *Vesica piscis*, is one of the symbols of Our Lord, and has been found engraved in the soft stone of the Roman Catacombs (where the early Christians took refuge), with the chrism monograms, and other inscriptions. St. Peter is represented holding fishes in his hand, and is called the "fisher of men." Seals of religious houses, abbeys, colleges, &c., as a rule are found to have an inclosing *Vesica* shape. The four evangelists are represented respectively as a man, a lion, a bull, and an eagle.

Many plants are used as symbols in Christian art : the vine was frequently employed as typical of Christ during

the Middle Ages and in later times ; in Scripture we find frequent allusions to the vine and grapes ; the wine-press is typical of the "passion," as we read in Isaiah. The vine was very much used as a symbolic plant in Byzantine sculpture, and Mosaic. The passion-flower, as its name denotes, was, and is, used as an emblem of the death of Christ. The lily is the emblem of purity, and has always been used as the attribute of the Virgin Mary ; consequently, we find this plant very often engraved on the tombs of virgins of the early Christian period. It always appears in pictures of the Annunciation, and is also the emblem of the mystery of the Incarnation. From the lily is derived the *fleur-de-lis*, one of the finest conventional renderings of any flower ; it was used very much as decoration in sculpture, painting, and weaving during the thirteenth and following centuries ; it was the royal insignia of France ; mediæval Florence bore it on her shield ; and it occurs as decoration in the crowns of many sovereigns, from King Solomon down to our own Queen. The trefoil is an emblem of the Trinity, and is a common form in Gothic decoration.

It may be wondered that, after all the meagre ciphers and symbols used by the early Christians, we see in later times such a magnificent development of purely religious art, that culminated in the period of the Renaissance, and that centred chiefly at Rome. In explanation of this, let us remember that Christianity, when robbed of its Eastern possessions by the Moslems, finally settled down, with what authority and power it could assume, in the old Imperial city of Rome, which was still rich in the ruins of its splendid inheritance of Greek art ; and when, for a while at least, the Iconoclasts (image-breakers) had ceased their ruthless warfare, there came gradually a clothing of the newer religion, at first in simple but ill-fitting garments, with the Eastern or Byzantine symbolism still clinging to them ; but very soon these vestments were laid aside, and the new Christianity decked herself in the gorgeous robes of the older Paganism. Whether

## 84 ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF ORNAMENT.

Christianity has gained, or not, by this adventitious aid, is not within our province here to consider ; but certainly the whole world admits that, through this, art has been immeasurably a great gainer.

A brief comparison of the two great classes of ornament—the symbolic (the one we have just considered), and the “æsthetic” (which is a class that indirectly has sprung from symbolism and realism)—would now be desirable. An æsthetic pattern in ornament is an arrangement in form or colour, which, by its perfect adaptability to the position it occupies, pleases and satisfies the eye, without any deeper meaning attached to it. If, for example, the pattern conveys a meaning, it would be symbolic ornament, and it cannot be a “picture,” because a picture must represent something. Though the form of an æsthetic pattern may be replete with beauty, as in the Greek anthemions, though it may border on sensuality in rich and brilliant colouring, as in Moorish and Eastern decoration, still it can afford no meaning beneath its surface expression ; it has no subject to appeal to the intellect ; it brings no story for imagination to disentangle, but is created chiefly for its own sake, to exist alone as a thing of beauty. A symphony in music is a composition consisting merely of harmonious sounds ; it has no subject-matter, and is therefore analogous to an æsthetic pattern in decoration ; the eye is charmed and feasted with the former in art, while the ear is equally so charmed with the latter in music—but the imagination, intellect, or deeper feelings are not touched with either.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN ORNAMENT.

*It will be found that many of the terms which appear in this Glossary have been more or less explained in the previous chapters. The reader is kindly asked to refer back to any of the terms when no explanation of such is given here.*

*Æsthetic*, or æsthetics, the "science of the beautiful." In ornament, that kind which appeals to the senses as an expression of beauty only. See page 84.

*Allegory*, see page 78.

*Alternation*, "repetition" and "variety" combined, or, strictly speaking, two different elements of form used in a design, and alternating with each other; Fig. 57.

*Anthemion*, a radiating ornament with a palmate outline, resembling the honeysuckle-like ornament of the Greeks.

*Balance*, proper equilibrium or counterpoise. In compositions that are not symmetrical the *weight* of the masses must be alike on either side of a central axis, as in irregular-shaped forms, or in decoration where heavy forms appear to rest on fragile supports; Renaissance ornament affords many examples of balance. See page 19.

*Banding*, decorating by means of lines and horizontal stripes of running ornament, Figs. 82 and 83.

*Catenary*, festoon-like ornament hanging from two points; the line formed by a chain in like suspension.

*Chequering*, covering a surface with a squared pattern in which the ornament alternates, and is identical in quantity with the ground space; also using a like pattern composed of crossed lines.

*Colour*, apart from the literal meaning of the word, ornament, to possess the value of colour, must be designed to express movement and contrast, it is best obtained by the use of light, dark, and intermediate effects, interlacing or superimposed on each other, as we see in Moresque and Celtic work.

*Complexity*, confusion ; the opposite of simplicity ; ornament in which the leading forms are not sufficiently apparent ; in architecture the overloading of subdivisions with ornament, it is characteristic of the later periods of all historic styles, and largely assisted in their extinction. It is a quality, however, that we can admire in small work, such as jewellery and missal painting.

*Contrast*, the straight line with the curved ; black and white ; ornamental forms composed of the straight and curved line will illustrate contrast ; a plain space alternating with an ornamented one, or an enriched moulding around a plain panel, &c. See page 18.

*Conventional*, in ornament it is a word of great elasticity ; in early efforts of decoration we see natural facts conventionalized to the extreme, partly from law and custom, and partly from the want of ability in the artist, as in savage decoration, in the zig-zag form of water with the Egyptians, and in the geometric decoration of the Arabians, &c. All ornament is more or less conventional, but we generally understand the term as that which is applied to decorative design where the *spirit* and finest qualities of nature are expressed and made subservient to the material and position it is to occupy as ornament, this being in opposition to the method in which natural forms are directly used. Persian flower ornament is a good example of natural conventionalism.

*Counterchange*, a pattern in which the ornament and ground are similar in shape, and alternate exactly with each other.

"Interchange" is a sort of counterchange, it was a favourite method in mediæval Gothic decoration, where running vertical or horizontal patterns on ribs, groins, and flat borders were usually painted so that ornament and ground alternately interchanged in colour on either side of the central axis.

*Diaper*, explained at page 43.

*Equilibrium*, see "Balance."

*Enlargement of Subject*, to help out an *idea* in design by means of added symbols, or attributes, as, for instance, in a figure of Bacchus we would help out the figure by placing around it grapes and the vine, cymbals, and thyrsi, &c., as its attributes.

*Eurythmy*, harmony in ornament ; a quality obtained by the use of contrasted but harmonious forms, expressed in a measured or proportionate quantity.



*Even distribution*, space and ornament contrasted proportionately; balancing of masses in a design; dissimilar forms alternating so as to make a contrasting pattern of complete harmony. A good diaper pattern will serve as an example of the term.

*Expression*, representation of ornament by various and particular means, as in *outline* by the pencil, pen, or point; in painting, by the brush; and in modelling, with tools and the fingers. In another sense expression is character or feeling in ornament.

*Fanciful*, a term generally applied to grotesque creations, for example, the hybrid animals, and figures with vegetable terminations met with in Pompeian and other decoration.

*Fitness*, adaptability; beauty in ornament combined with utility. See page 16.

*Flexibility*, a quality derived in a measure from plants of a free growth; a combination of delicacy and firmness; the universal freedom, nerve, and elasticity found in natural forms when copied in ornament gives flexibility, in opposition to rigid and angular lines which produce *inflexibility*.

*Fluted*, channelled, or grooved in sunk hollows or concavities, like a Greek doric column.

*Geometric*, or "geometrical arrangement," ornament constructed on a basis of geometry, as in tiles and diapers where all-over repetition is desired; the circle, square, lozenge, octagon, hexagon, and triangle, are the chief geometrical forms of patterns in ornament. Moresque decoration is pre-eminently geometric in construction.

*Grotesque*, from the word grot or grotto; when the fantastic forms of ancient Roman and Pompeian decoration were discovered in the baths and underground "grotta" and copied in the Vatican decorations (see Figs. 88 and 89), the term "grotesque" was afterwards applied to all that kind of fanciful ornament; the word is also used to denote that quaint class of Gothic sculptured creations, such as winged dragons, grinning monsters, &c., that serve to decorate the terminations of dripstone mouldings, gargoyles, bosses, and finials; many of these are very elaborate in design and full of meaning.

*Guilloche*, an ornament composed of parallel curved lines flowing and crossing each other in a measured and geometric manner. See Figs. 28 and 31.

*Idealistic*, in opposition to "realistic" or "naturalistic;" the abstract or general truth and simplicity of nature expressed in design; conventional and æsthetic principles as opposed to a literal statement of natural facts. Greek ornament, the most idealistic, modern practice as a rule is the opposite.



*Imbrication*, overlapping or scale-like ornament ; fir-cones, the fruit of the hop, tiles on the roof of a house, the bark or natural covering of the Chili pine afford examples of imbrication. It is used as decoration on torus (half round) mouldings, and on small columns, and is a common way of filling certain spaces on Italian majolica plates.

*Inappropriate ornament*, see page 3.

*Independent ornament*, see pages 2 and 3, also Fig. 94.

*Interlacing*, ornament composed of bands and ribbon-like lines woven together, or only crossing at intervals, so as to give an appearance of strength to the apparent weak material, as in Celtic and Arabian ornament ; among examples of interlaced work may be mentioned braided, trellis, basket, weaving, and net-work.

*Intersection*, forms cutting across each other at a more direct angle than what is generally shown in "interlacing" ; geometric foliated figures in Gothic tracery are generally composed by means of intersected circles, &c.

*Monotony*, sameness ; without contrast or relief to the eye ; it is a very undesirable feature in ornament, as examples of it may be noticed : a diaper without enough contrasting elements ; mouldings coming together whose widths are too equal ; panelling without sufficient variety in size—in short, any lack of variety in the composition of ornament produces monotony.

*Mnemonic*, ornament in which written signs or other elements are used for the purpose of aiding the memory in recalling particular scenes and facts. See page 93.

*Order*, regularity obtained by harmony in the contrasting elements ; pleasing sequence in the arrangement of opposite forms ; ornament that is governed by its plan ; it is of such vital importance in a design that ornament can scarcely have any existence without it.

*Powdering*, sprays of flowers, leaves, and other decorative units sprinkled on a ground without regularity ; "powdering" is a favourite method of decoration with the Japanese. See Fig. 79.

*Radiation*, diverging from a point or from a straight or curved line. Explained at page 19.

*Realistic*, a style of decoration in which natural forms are applied without any alteration from the natural types ; it is opposed to the "idealistic" and the "conventional" in ornament, and is rarely found in the best historic styles.

*Repetition*, multiplication in ornament of any decorative unit. For explanation see pages 17 and 18, and Figs. 3, 9, and 27.

*Reeded*, convex or half-round forms applied to a flat or curved surface, producing the reverse effect of "fluting" ; some of

the columns in Egyptian architecture present a reeded appearance, being literally sculptured to represent a bundle of reeds tied together.

*Repose*, quietness, dignity, and breadth ; designs that best illustrate repose, would be marked by an easy flow of line without abruptness in form or colour, and an absence of small detail ; or if the detail be kept subordinate and only suggested, the quality of repose may still remain ; the frieze of the Parthenon is a fine example of this latter variety of repose. See the word at page 20.

*Scale*, relative natural proportion of the different parts of a decorative composition to each other. Ornament should be designed in reference to the position it is to occupy, size, and distance from which it is viewed. If a design is composed of different organic forms, they should have their natural proportion to each other, especially if these forms occupy the same field, but this need not be the case when different parts are cut off from each other by inclosing mouldings, as in panels, pilasters, medallions, spandrels, &c. ; the smaller the inclosing space, the smaller in scale, and *vice-versâ*, will be the ornamental filling ; for instance, the frieze of a room, partly from its greater size, and partly from its greater distance from the eye, or line of the horizon, will have its decoration larger in scale than the panels of the door or window shutters. The same rule applies to scale in all objects of decorative art.

*Scalloping*, a concave and a convex form of surface alternating with each other.

*Series*, sequence of similar forms connected together, as the beads in bead-mouldings. Sets of connected forms, or courses, in order of the same kind of ornament. See Figs. 29, 32, 34, 51, and 55.

*Setting out*, the planning of a scheme of decoration ; the first constructive lines or marking-out of the ornament on panels and other surfaces or spaces ; the skeleton lines of a design. See pages 27, 28, and 29.

*Spacing*, the marking of widths in mouldings, panels, rails, borders, &c. An equality of divisions and sub-divisions in decoration is, in most cases, inartistic, and should be guarded against ; a harmonious variety in such widths and distances is very desirable in gaining an artistic effect. See pages 30, 35, 36, and 37.

*Spiral*, the curved line forming a volute (as in the Ionic Capital) and wave ornament ; the axis or line of construction in univalve shells. See Figs. 20, 35, 36, and 37.

*Stability*, firmness and strength in the general appearance of a design ; the straight line is the chief factor of stability in ornament (see page 6). Where a quantity of curved lines

are used in a panel or pilaster decoration straight-lined forms must be introduced to counteract the weak and flimsy effect of the curved ones, especially in a pilaster, which is really an architectural feature of support ; and for the same reason heavier forms should be kept at or near the bottom of such decoration, and lighter ones near the top ; this, however, is not so necessary in ceilings or carpets : the ornament here seems to *float* on such surfaces, the inclosing border lines of which afford the required appearance of strength.

*Style*, kind or nature of ornament ; there are two great styles or kinds of ornament—namely, the “naturalistic or realistic,” and the “conventional,” which is sometimes called “idealistic.”

*Spotting*, this word has nearly the same meaning as “powdering,” the only difference being that the units of form in such decoration have (or may have) an apparent geometrical basis, the ground in both cases occupying a larger space than the ornament. See Figs. 63 and 81.

*Suitability*, fitness or adaptability ; the great thing to remember is the nature and plan of the object we have to decorate, and to design the ornament accordingly, for it is very evident that what would be good ornament for one object or position would be bad for another ; it is obvious, for instance, that designs for engraved silver or muslin prints will not do exactly for stone-carving or iron work, or ornament designed to fill a certain space cannot be expanded or crushed into any space.

*Superimposed* or *superposed*, an ornament which is laid on the surface of another, such as a flowing pattern on a diapered ground ; or broad, ribbon-like ornament laid on a pattern formed of narrow and fine lines, as seen mostly in the wall decoration of Moresque design and in Persian tiles. In the former kind of ornament, as in the wall-patterns of the Alhambra, we often find two, three, and sometimes four different designs superimposed on each other, and the judicious use of different colours and gold prevented confusion in the patterns ; the complexity is even of a well-ordered kind.

*Subordination*, the keeping of certain parts of a design secondary and inferior in importance to other parts that we wish to make the primary elements and of chief prominence ; it is illustrated by the series of inferior portions regularly descending in the order of importance, and used as a foil to show to the best advantage the larger masses in painting and drawing, and the higher relieved portions in modelling.

*Symmetry*, equality of form and mass on either side of a central line in any ornamental composition ; perfect balance and

absolute sameness in the two sides of a piece of ornament.  
See Figs. 89, 90, and 91.

*Tangential growth*, the principal construction lines in foliated ornament and scroll patterns should illustrate "tangential growth"; the stems and curves should appear to flow out of the central line. This natural principle is derived from the growth of stems and branches of freely growing plants, and under this law the secondary lines of construction in a flowing pattern should appear to touch or glide into the primary ones, and not to cross or interlace.

*Uniformity*, see page 33.

*Unit*, the smallest or simplest *complete* expression of ornament in any scheme of decoration.

*Unity*, perfect agreement in all the parts of a design; harmony and order. These qualities are best arrived at by the judicious use of the principle of *contrast*; unity is often a characteristic of designs that are very monotonous, so by itself it will scarcely render a design pleasing as a whole; *variety* must be added to unity in order to effect this.

*Unsymmetrical*, without symmetry, such as the volute or single scroll form. See the word "balance."

*Variety*, a mixture of various shaped forms; alternation in different measures of various elements in ornament.



+

Jul-25-1902









STERLING & FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE  
NK1510 .W37  
Ward, James/Elementary principles of orn stack



3 1962 00072 7051



